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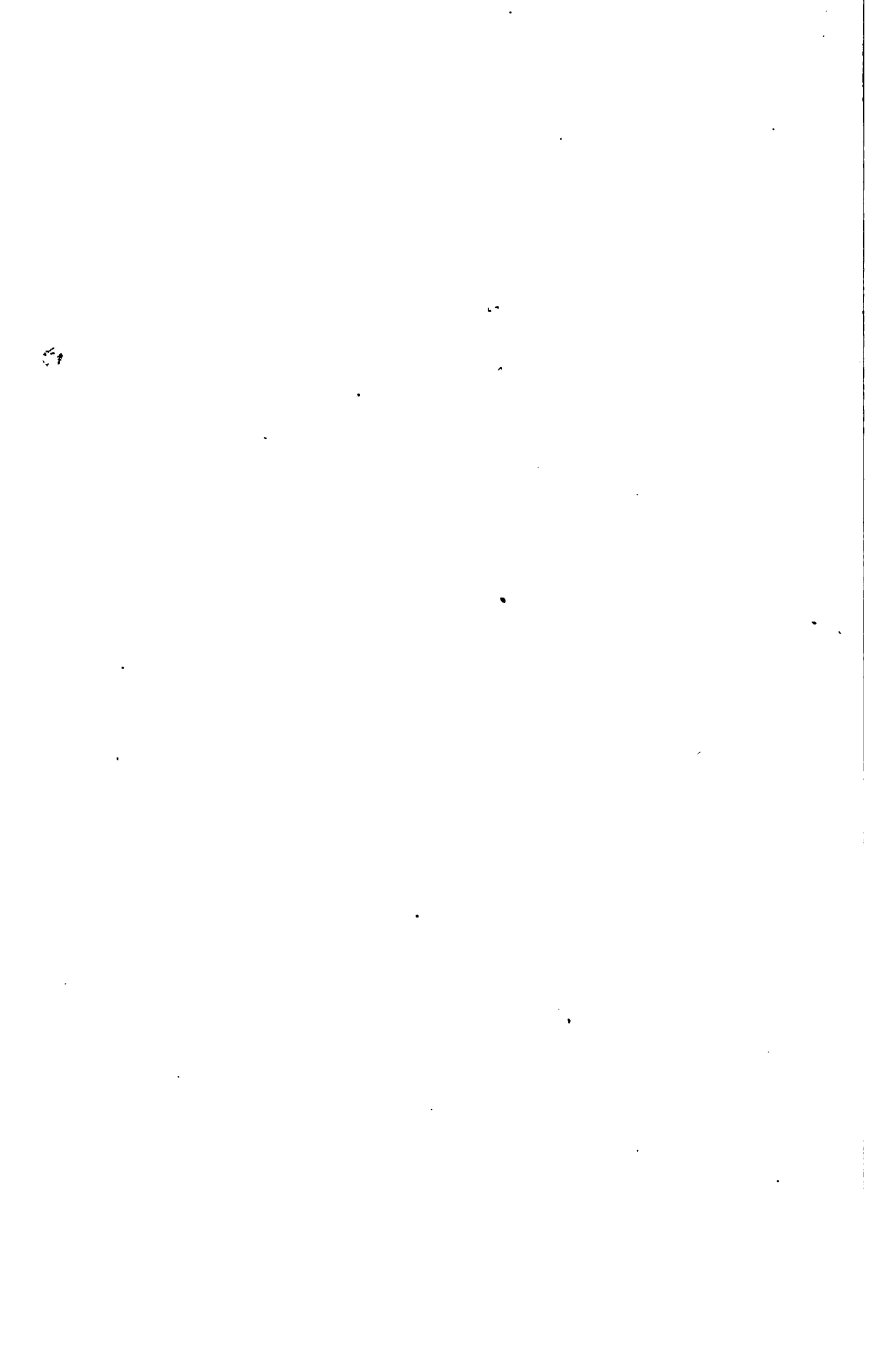
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STUDIES IN  
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# STUDIES IN ENGLISH SYNTAX

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## PREFACE

Of the three papers here published the first appeared originally in the *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, new series, vol. viii (1900); the second was published in *Modern Language Notes*, Baltimore, vol. xix (1904). Both have been revised and augmented. The third paper has not before been published. The three belong together, being essays in interpretative syntax. The larger purpose of these essays is to interest the reader in the structure of the English language, to show him the wide reach of syntactical problems, and to discover and interpret by a scrutiny of all periods of the language some of the general laws that underlie the architecture of English speech.

It remains for the author to thank his critics, friendly and otherwise, for their comments on the first two papers as originally published. He would not be understood as underrating the service of statistics in syntax; but, believing as he does, that syntax is the autobiography of language, he believes more in weighing than in counting, and less in tabulation than in correlation.

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# STUDIES IN ENGLISH SYNTAX

## CHAPTER I

### INTERPRETATIVE SYNTAX

#### I. INTRODUCTION

By interpretative syntax is meant not so much a new kind of syntax as a distinctive method of approach. I am well aware that the expression has not the prestige of previous usage. Indeed no one at all familiar with the modern trend of syntactical studies could say that they serve in the slightest degree as aids in the interpretation of literature, and hardly more in the interpretation of language. It seems to be assumed that syntax has nothing to do with literary criticism or with stylistic effects. And as the study of English syntax is now conducted, one can hardly imagine two persons more alien in their aims and methods than the literary critic and the writer on syntax.

It does not avail to cite beautiful definitions of philology, definitions that assert the philologist's equal right to all the slopes of Parnassus; this alienation exists in practice, and it has proved hurtful both to the student of literature and to the student of syntax. Literary criticism, lacking the solid basis of language study, has lost the note of authority and become mincing and arbitrary; while studies in syntax, divorced from the

vitalizing influence of literature, have become mechanical in method and statistical in result.

Of the two, syntax has lost the more heavily; for in the study of syntax counting has so taken the place of weighing that it may fairly be questioned whether the majority of monographs devoted to English syntax make any appeal whatsoever to the real feeling for syntax latent in the reader, or latent even in the investigator himself. There *is* such a thing as a feeling for syntax, a syntactic sense, — though we are in danger of losing it, — a sense that is as necessary for appreciating the range and import of syntactical distinctions as taste is necessary in the realm of æsthetics or conscience in the realm of morals.

Not only is the study of syntax divorced from the study of literature, not only has the feeling for syntactical distinctions been blunted by the mania for statistics, but the old line of cleavage is still run between syntax and inflections. The grammars and special monographs continue to treat inflections and syntax as two separate and unrelated subjects. But a moment's consideration will show that inflectional forms are the product of syntactical relations. They are the deposit of syntactical forces. One might as well try to explain the rounded forms of pebbles in a streamlet, without considering the agency of the water, as to explain inflectional changes apart from the syntactical agencies that shaped them.

Syntax has thus become narrowed and isolate. No longer looked upon as an integral and organic part of language and literature, it is viewed as something external, a mere scaffolding, — a series of separate ladders,

on which Germans are ascending and descending.<sup>1</sup> Now syntax is not something external; its problems are not separate at all. It is a vast network with countless radiations and interweavings. The best investigator is not one who is quick at figures or dead to literature. He is rather one who in his alertness and susceptibility should suggest old Sir John Davies's idea of the soul, — being

Much like a subtle spider which doth sit  
In middle of her web, which spreadeth wide;  
If aught do touch the utmost thread of it,  
She feels it instantly on every side.

## II. SYNTAX AND LITERATURE

There are literary effects both subtle and far-reaching that find expression in none of the traditional canons of rhetoric or literary criticism, but in the phenomena of syntax and of syntax alone. Take, for example, canto XI of Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, in which the omission of the verb in the principal clauses adds an element of calm that could not otherwise be secured :

Calm is<sup>2</sup> the morn without a sound,  
Calm as to suit a calmer grief,  
And only thro' the faded leaf  
The chestnut pattering to the ground :

<sup>1</sup> This passage aroused the unappeasable indignation of Dr. John Ries (see *Englische Studien*, vol. 29). I am afraid the author of *Was ist Syntax?* is what Joe Jefferson would have called "an unconscious humorist." If he will kindly turn to the 12th verse of the 28th chapter of *Genesis*, one of the more prominent books of the Old Testament, he will find that I have done nothing more than liken some of his countrymen to angels. I did not have him in mind.

<sup>2</sup> The only verb of a principal clause in these five stanzas is the second word of the first line, *is*. Note how well the colon after each stanza indicates the uniformity of mood maintained.

Calm and deep peace on this high wold,  
And on these dews that drench the furze,  
And all the silvery gossamers  
That twinkle into green and gold :

Calm and still light on yon great plain  
That sweeps with all its autumn bowers,  
And crowded farms and lessening towers,  
To mingle with the bounding main :

Calm and deep peace in this wide air,  
These leaves that redden to the fall ;  
And in my heart, if calm at all,  
If any calm, a calm despair :

Calm on the seas, and silver sleep,  
And waves that sway themselves in rest,  
And dead calm in that noble breast  
Which heaves but with the heaving deep.

Compare now the brooding quietude of those stanzas with the jerkiness of these lines, so filled with verbs :

I hear the noise about thy keel ;  
I hear the bell struck in the night :  
I see the cabin-window bright ;  
I see the sailor at the wheel.

Verbs denote activity and change: they are bustling and fussy. Their presence in certain reaches of lyric poetry would be as nullifying as the creaking of organ pedals during a dirge. When thought gives way to feeling, when the emotion of the poet no longer soars but poises and hovers, the absence of the verb — a purely syntactical phenomenon — becomes a most marked characteristic of the sentence structure. Note the effect in these lines :

Sunset and evening star,  
And one clear call for me !

Twilight and evening bell,  
And after that the dark !

Observe in these lines from Poe how quickly the verbs take flight when the poet's activity of thought is merged into mere brooding :

And all my days are trances,  
And all my nightly dreams  
Are where thy dark eye glances,  
And where thy footstep gleams, —  
In what ethereal dances,  
By what eternal streams.

*(To One in Paradise.)*

And so, all the night-tide, I lie down by the side  
Of my darling — my darling — my life and my bride,  
In the sepulchre there by the sea,  
In her tomb by the sounding sea.

*(Annabel Lee.)*

She tenderly kissed me,  
She fondly caressed,  
And then I fell gently  
To sleep on her breast, —  
Deeply to sleep  
From the heaven of her breast.

*(For Annie.)*

As Poe lingers out his mood by adding prepositional phrases, so Swinburne adds relative clauses, assertion being subordinated, not wholly eliminated :

I have put my days and dreams out of mind,  
Days that are over, dreams that are done.

*(Triumph of Time.)*

There are sounds where the soul's delight takes fire,  
 Face to face with its own desire;  
 A delight that rebels, a desire that reposes.

(*Triumph of Time.*)

Delight, the rootless flower,  
 And love, the bloomless bower;  
 Delight that lives an hour,  
 And love that lives a day.

(*Before Dawn.*)

Such word alone were fit for only thee,  
 If his and thine have met  
 Where spirits rise and set,  
 His whom we see not, thine whom scarce we see.

(*A Birth-Song.*)

Sweet is each in season, good the gift it brings,  
 Sweet as change of night and day with altering wings,  
 Night that lulls world-weary day, day that comforts night,  
 Night that fills our eyes with sleep, day that fills with light.

(*Chorus in Erechtheus.*)

In the study of lyric poetry, especially of the elegy, the omission or subordination of formal assertion will be found a suggestive index to the poet's mind. Professor Paul<sup>1</sup> remarks that when we hear the cry of "Fire!" before we see the flames, the idea implied in "Fire!" is the subject, the situation the predicate. In elegiac poems the situation is often the predicate, the poet having only to repeat certain unassertive words or verbless phrases; the elegiac setting supplies the predicate. David does not say "I mourn for Absalom," but "O my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

<sup>1</sup> *Prinzipien der Sprachgeschichte*, 3d ed., p. 116.

The omission or subordination of assertive words is a characteristic not only of types of literature but of types of mind as well. "It was in examining the writings of De Quincey," says Vernon Lee,<sup>1</sup> "with no other view originally than the improvement of my own English, that I first came across certain facts which led me to the notion that there may be some necessary connection between the structure of a man's sentences and his more human characteristics, and that style, in so far as it is individual, is but a kind of gesture or gait, revealing, with the faithfulness of an unconscious habit, the essential peculiarities of the writer's temperament and modes of life." She proceeds to set forth the dearth of verbs and adverbs in De Quincey's writings in comparison with the writings of De Foe and Stevenson, "two writers as dissimilar as possible from De Quincey." She finds that the chief part of the styles of De Foe and Stevenson is given to action, while with De Quincey "mere being, mere quality is to the fore." This is a fruitful generalization and one that touches the essential quality of De Quincey's mind. Compare with the poetical selections already cited this characteristic passage, in which De Quincey is commenting upon, or rather brooding over, the famous sentence in the *Urn Burial* beginning "Now, since these bones have rested":

What a melodious ascent as of a prelude to some impassioned requiem breathing from the poms of earth and from the sanctities of the grave! What a *fluctus decumanus* of rhetoric! Time expounded, not by generations or centuries, but by the vast periods of conquests and dynasties; by cycles of Pharaohs and Ptolemies,

<sup>1</sup> "Studies in Literary Psychology: (1) The Syntax of De Quincey" (*Contemporary Review*, November, 1903).



Antiochi, and Arsacides! And these vast successions of time distinguished and figured by the uproars which revolve at their inaugurations — by the drums and trappings rolling overhead upon the chambers of forgotten dead — the trepidations of time and mortality vexing, at secular intervals, the everlasting Sabbaths of the grave! (*Rhetoric.*)

But the syntax of omission may be employed not only to interpret literature and character, but to interpret history as well. Everyone has observed how quickly different professions, industries, societies of every sort, gather about them a special vocabulary. But more interesting than vocabulary is the phase of syntax that these social organizations exhibit. The members not only employ new words, but they omit well-known words that will be supplied, as it were, from the common fund. This is a form of abridged syntax. Transitive verbs especially are used intransitively, because the direct object is understood and need not be expressed.

When we say, for example, that Miss A. *plays* well, only an irredeemable outsider would reply "Plays what?" So, too, in certain circles, we shall be readily understood when we say that Miss B. *paints* well or *draws* well; that C. *throws* well or *kicks* well. Students of language had long ago noticed how frequently transitive verbs become intransitive; but it remained for M. Bréal to interpret this trend from transitive to intransitive. "An abundance of intransitive verbs in a language," says M. Bréal,<sup>1</sup> "is a sign of civilization." And the remark

<sup>1</sup> *Essai de sémantique* (1897), p. 330. Instead of "un signe de civilisation," would not "un signe d'organisation" be more accurate? But M. Bréal's book is too good to be lightly emended. See also, on the same topic, Darmesteter's *La Vie des mots*, §§ 22-27.

is as true as it is acute, provided, of course, these intransitive verbs were once transitive. Such intransitive verbs do increase in number just as men become more closely banded together, and as civilization succeeds in diffusing a common fund of information. There are very few of these verbs in Old English; but they swarm in Modern English, especially in nineteenth-century English, because society is now more closely knit. The newspapers alone have in this way made it possible to use scores of transitive verbs intransitively.

The same is true, of course, in the case of adjectives used without their nouns. "The blue and the gray," "The New York Central," "The Phi and the Di," and similar abridged phrases testify to a fund of common intelligence and common interests. The study, then, of these omissions in the different stages of any language would not result in a barren array of statistics, but would furnish an index to a people's gradual nationalization, and indicate how far collectivism was replacing individualism.<sup>1</sup>

And why should not syntax aid in the interpretation of history? History is one: a nation's art, science, architecture, laws, literature, and language are but parts of a larger whole.

Deep and broad, where none may see,  
Spring the foundations of that shadowy throne  
Where man's one nature, queen-like, sits alone,  
Centred in a majestic unity.

<sup>1</sup> I am inclined to think that the dropping of inflections is another indication of collectivism. Words do not have to be pronounced to a finish when speakers have learned to presume on a community of ideas and information.

Shall we study the evolution of a people's character in the way they build their bridges and highways and homes, and not in the way they build their sentences? All that man has done existed first in the mind and was latent in the language of will and purpose before it was bodied in deed.

The uniformity that exists in all the varied phenomena of human history finds its parallel, where we should expect to find it, in the corresponding uniformity of linguistic processes. This latter uniformity is not in individual words, or sounds, or inflections. It is in word relations, that is, in syntax. It is one of those touches of nature that make the whole world kin. Polynesian words, for example, are not our words; but the Polynesians have their subjunctive mood, their passive voice, their array of tenses and cases, because the principles of syntax are psychical and therefore universal.

An illustration of the interpretative attitude toward syntax is found in Professor Gildersleeve's *Essays and Studies*.<sup>1</sup> "We contrast the epos of Greece with the epos of Rome. One grammatical difference sums the whole matter up. No historical present in the one, while the historical present abounds in the other, and nothing more is needed for him who appreciates the range of grammatical phenomena." It has been said of Addison and Johnson that "One of the chief points of contrast in their style lies in the easy and natural recurrence in the former of the verb, and the artificial preponderance given in the latter to the noun." And

<sup>1</sup> See chapter on *Grammar and Æsthetics*. See also Elster's *Prinzipien der Litteraturwissenschaft*, pp. 414-424. Both authors discuss the æsthetic side of syntax. As used in this paper, it will be seen that interpretative syntax includes æsthetic syntax, but more besides.

Professor Gildersleeve adds, "This is a grammatical observation of wide reach and capable of ample illustration." An analogous illustration is seen in Faguet's comment on Hugo's style:<sup>1</sup> "We have seen from the first that Hugo is fond of antithesis; but what is apt to be overlooked is that with Hugo antithesis, before being a quality of style, is a method of composition because it is a habit of his mind. It is the note of symmetry in the exposition of ideas. Hugo likes to have thought respond to thought, like strophe and antistrophe, or right pavilion and left pavilion." Faguet remarks of Hugo in a preceding paragraph, "Il a le goût de la composition même *matérielle*." No two writers could be mentioned who are further from Hugo in spirit than Johnson and Macaulay; but in their fondness for architectural symmetry in sentence-structure, a syntactical distinction at bottom, the three stand together.

It is not easy to set bounds to the radiations of syntactical distinctions into other departments of thought and activity. The strongest stanza yet written by an American poet seems to me to express a truth already taught by syntax. You will remember that all the Romance tongues discarded the endings of the Latin future indicative, and gradually built their future tense out of the verb *have* preceded by an infinitive.<sup>2</sup> French

<sup>1</sup> *Dix-Neuvième Siècle: Études littéraires*, p. 207.

<sup>2</sup> So, too, Old English *Ich sceal* (*sculan*), *I shall*, meant originally *I have to, ought to, or must*. It is interesting to find that Modern Greek has discarded the old future and evolved our *will* + infinitive. "The habit of forming the ordinary Future with *θέλω* had doubtless established itself in the vulgar speech long before it was admitted in the literary style; and can hardly have arisen before the vernacular had begun to diverge very decidedly from the classical type, *i. e.*, not earlier than about 300 A. D., possibly

*Je chanterai*, for example, is literally and was originally not *I shall sing*, but *I have to sing* (= *J'ai chanter*, *Ego habeo cantare*). And so for Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese. The expression connoted obligation or necessity, as in Tertullian's *quem habemus odisse* (*Apologeticus* 37), *whom we have to (must) hate*. But the Romance tongues have gradually passed from the obligatory *I have to*, *you have to*, *he has to*, to the voluntary and colorless *I shall*, *you will*, *he will*. An imposed duty has become a recognized and accepted duty. Says Emerson:

So nigh is grandeur to our dust,  
So near is God to man,  
When duty whispers low, Thou must,  
The youth replies, I can !

One of the questions most hotly discussed by the so-called<sup>1</sup> Lake School of poets related to the distinction between fancy and imagination. The distinction is a vital one in literary criticism, and was best stated by Wordsworth.<sup>2</sup> It is now generally agreed that, while both imagination and fancy must work with materials already furnished, imagination is the constructive faculty, fancy the decorative faculty. Whatever be the kind of imagination employed — whether poetic,

much later. In low Latin such forms as *cantare habeo* for *cantabo* became common from the sixth century onwards." — Vincent and Dickson's *Handbook to Modern Greek* (1893), p. 326.

<sup>1</sup> "So-called" because the School as a school had no existence. "Wordsworth and Southey never had one principle in common," says De Quincey. See his second paper on Coleridge in *Literary Reminiscences*.

<sup>2</sup> See his *Poetical Works*, Preface to edition of 1815. The distinction made by Wordsworth is quoted almost in full by Fernald in *English Synonyms and Antonyms*, p. 210.

scientific, practical, architectural, or inventive — its chief function is to build; while fancy, following after, adorns or modifies.

May we not interpret this distinction in terms of syntax by saying that imagination is shown in a writer's choice of subjects and predicates, fancy in his choice of adjectives and adverbs? Strip Browning of all that functions either as adjective or as adverb, reduce his sentences to the bare forms of psychological subject and psychological predicate, and have you not still a strong and stimulative body of thought? Would Tennyson fare so well? Could you find the residue of Swinburne? Wordsworth's illustration of fancy is Shakespeare's description of Queen Mab:

In shape no bigger than an agate-stone  
On the forefinger of an alderman.

Those lines, you see, are purely adjectival. They do not assert, they attribute. But when the great dramatist says, —

The quality of mercy is not strained,  
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven  
Upon the place beneath,

or

Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day  
Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops,

or

The lunatic, the lover, and the poet  
Are of imagination all compact,

or when David says, "The Lord is my shepherd," — we feel that the human outlook has been permanently broadened. Pontoonns have been constructed joining

things that were never before joined. But these pontoons unite subject to predicate, not adjective to noun, or adverb to verb.

Of course, imagination and fancy usually go together. But the essence of the distinction is that the products of the imagination, like the joint creations of subject and predicate, have a life of their own and are thus, to a degree, independent; while the forms of fancy, like the functions of adjective and adverb, are parasitic and thus relative. "The best in this kind are but shadows." The difference between the literature of Elizabeth's reign and the literature produced by the Caroline and Metaphysical poets who followed, is that in the first a full and splendid stream of imaginative thought flows from subject to predicate; in the second this current is diverted and dissipated among adjectives and adverbs: what should have been tributaries have become bayous, and drain rather than swell the central flow.

One of the problems that to-day are pressing most insistently for solution is, To what extent may syntactical peculiarities be relied upon as tests in determining authorship? Everyone even cursorily familiar with the methods of biblical, especially of Old Testament, criticism will have observed the importance that is attached to the argument from syntax. The insufficiency of some of these tests is equalled only by the defiant assurance with which mutually exclusive results are defended. Is it possible to find in syntax a criterion of authorship? Not if syntax be divorced from personality and reduced to gross statistics; not if it be confined to the triangle of the empirical, the historical, and the genetic, which,

according to Gröber,<sup>1</sup> are the only possible kinds of syntax.

Suppose that we have two poems and wish to know whether they were written by the same author. Let us call them A and B. If A have many peculiarities of construction not shared by B, if the *ἅπαξ λεγόμενα* of the one be the *δεκάκις λεγόμενα* of the other, — this alone proves nothing. They might still have come from the same author, the differences being due to a difference of topic, of purpose, of mood, of range or elevation of thought. Let us first interpret the syntax of each poem separately. If the syntactical peculiarities of A are found to be numerous and significant enough to enable us to get at the author's personality, and if the syntactical peculiarities of B are also numerous and significant enough to reflect personality, we are provided at once with invaluable evidence in determining whether the two poems came from the same author; but if the syntactical evidences are neither numerous nor vital enough to betray personality — and mere number counts for little<sup>2</sup> — the evidence from syntax is void of force.

Let me give a simple illustration. Suppose I desired to know whether a certain anonymous novel were written

<sup>1</sup> *Grundriss der romanischen Philologie* (1888), vol. I, p. 211.

<sup>2</sup> "The argument from style," says Driver (*Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, p. 167, n. 2), "is *cumulative*: hence expressions which, if they stood alone, would have no appreciable weight, may help to support an inference, when they are combined with others pointing in the same direction." The argument from style becomes cumulative in the true sense only when the concurrent expressions are both numerous and significant, — significant enough to be distinctive and characteristic. The stereotyped commonplaces of expression, however numerous the coincidences, cannot be relied upon as trustworthy evidence. See the admirable section on "Bestimmung des Autors" in Bernheim's *Lehrbuch der historischen Methode*.



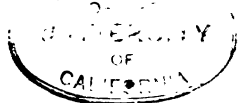
by Zola. I should turn for evidence to a dissertation which I have recently read with the keener pleasure because the author's method fortifies my own views as to the range and personal correlations of syntax. The dissertation is entitled *Syntactical Studies in the Language of Zola*,<sup>1</sup> and is by Eugène Gaufinez. Dr. Gaufinez confines his study to Zola's *Docteur Pascal* and devotes the body of his work, sixty pages, to the mere enumeration of Zola's peculiarities in the use of nouns, pronouns, adjectives, and the other parts of speech. Most dissertations would have stopped at the bare enumeration; but Dr. Gaufinez goes a step farther. He adds a page of admirable interpretation. Zola's syntactical usages were found to be numerous enough and significant enough to enable Dr. Gaufinez to see through them into the method and personality of the novelist. And his interpretation, which I quote in full, not only might serve as a criterion of authorship, should occasion arise, but shows also the close affinity between syntax and literary criticism, when syntax is weighed in the balances of style.

Dr. Gaufinez thus summarizes and interprets his results:

"Two principles, different but not opposed, seem to have dictated the laws of Zola's syntax. These are, briefly, (1) the principle of picturesque expression and (2) the principle of natural expression.

"(1) The tendency of Zola, as indeed of all the impressionists, is to paint rather than to narrate, to produce

<sup>1</sup> *Études syntaxiques sur la langue de Zola dans le Docteur Pascal*, Inaugural-Dissertation zur Erlangung der Doktorwürde, von Eugène Gaufinez, Bonn, 1894.



sensations with things rather than to awaken ideas about things. Let us picture him at work, pen in hand, his mind's eye fixed on some image that appeals to his powerful imagination. Rapidly he sketches the rough draft, adds a few of the most significant details; then, as his attention is by degrees directed to the different outlines of the picture, he notes and determines these, returns and emphasizes those that are most striking, until, from this confusion of details, there is disengaged the living picture which he has before his eyes, the novelist really building up his work before us. Hence his jerky style, with its strange phrases; hence his massing of adjectives and participles, his abstract terms, his frequent imperfects. They are, so to speak, the strokes of the painter's brush.

"(2) The second principle which controls Zola's syntax is the determination to write just as people talk, to give to his style the untaught cadence of ordinary speech. Thought can be expressed with perfect clearness without a rigorous adherence to the rules of grammar. Then, too, popular and conversational speech, in spite of its licenses—or better, on account of them—has a vivacity and picturesqueness of its own, quite different from that found in the language of scholars. Hence, in the style of Zola the numerous inversions and ellipses; hence his peculiar punctuation, and all those turns of expression that so often make us feel that we are listening to spoken speech instead of reading written speech.

"These are the two principles on which the syntax of Zola seems to be founded."

Dr. Gaufinez has here interpreted syntax in terms of

personality and stylistic effect. His summary would be of great value as Zola evidence in case of disputed authorship, and has, besides, a solidity and definiteness that contrast sharply with the elegant trifling that parades itself in high places to-day under the name of literary criticism.

Carlyle's style has been analyzed and discussed as much as the style of any English prose writer of the nineteenth century, but one of his most characteristic traits has escaped detection because it belongs to syntax rather than to any of the categories commonly grouped as literary. The following illustrative citations are made from the first few pages of Leask's *Readings from Carlyle*, the italics being my own:

All these heaped and huddled together, with nothing but a little carpentry and masonry between them; — crammed in, like salted fish in their barrel; — or weltering, shall I say, like an Egyptian pitcher of tamed vipers, each struggling to get its head above the others: *such work* goes on under that smoke-counterpane.

To what extent, by what methods, with what effects, in various times and countries, Deception takes the place of wages of Performance: *here* truly is an Inquiry big with results for the future time.

The miserable fraction of Science which our united Mankind, in a wide Universe of Nescience, has acquired, why is not *this*, with all diligence, imparted to all?

Perhaps in the most thickly-peopled country, some three days annually might suffice to shoot all the able-bodied Paupers that had accumulated within the year. Let Governments think of *this*.

Are we not Spirits, that are shaped into a body, into an Appearance; and that fade away again into air and Invisibility? *This* is no metaphor.

Napoleon too, and his Moscow Retreats and Austerlitz Campaigns! Was *it* all other than the veriest Spectre-hunt?

We could proceed deliberately to 'organise Labour,' not doomed to perish unless we effected it within year and day; — every willing Worker that proved superfluous, finding a bridge ready for him. *This* verily will have to be done; the Time is big with *this*.

What the light of your mind, which is the direct inspiration of the Almighty, pronounces incredible, — *that*, in God's name, leave uncredited; at your peril do not try believing *that*.

Observe in these citations, which could be indefinitely multiplied, the burden laid upon the italicized words. When Carlyle starts with an idea, it expands so swiftly that there is no noun in the language comprehensive enough to compass it in its entirety. Victor Hugo integrates by means of interspersed appositives: *chose tragique*, *coincidence bizarre*, etc.; De Quincey, by means of delicately adjusted connectives; Carlyle, to the last a talker rather than writer, by means of *this*, *that*, and similar retrospective or recapturing words. Carlyle's style is essentially pictorial, but he sketches in his pictures without knowing or caring whether they are to serve as subjects or objects — he is chiefly interested in their completeness. When the picture is finished, he sends a *this* or *that* after it and thus joins it to his improvised predicate. Hence, too, the constant impression in Carlyle's writings of voice and gesture.

### III. SYNTAX AND LANGUAGE

But syntax is the autobiography of language, and may be interpreted in terms of linguistic law or idiom as well as in terms of literary criticism or stylistic effect. In either case, however, before syntactical distinctions can be made to disclose their full wealth of import and suggestiveness, they must be held long in solution. The

attempt must not be made to force a premature and barren crystallization. It is one thing to classify, another to interpret. The more sympathetically the syntax of English is studied, the more striking will appear the interrelation of its parts and the continuity of its functions. One comes almost to believe that the norms of syntax are indestructible, so persistently do they reappear in unexpected places. If a construction is common in Old English prose, let the student watch confidently for its reappearance or for its lineal descendant somewhere in Modern English. Trust no man who tells you that it is dead. Let Longfellow's line be your guide:

There is no death! What seems so is transition.

Take, for example, Old English *weorðan*, *to become*. We are told in works on English syntax that *weorðan* survives to-day, like a fly in amber, only in the crystallized expression *Woe worth*, as in Scott's

Woe worth the chase, woe worth the day,  
That costs thy life, my gallant gray!

We are informed that *weorðan* and *bēon* had come to mean pretty much the same thing; and that, although German preserves the distinction between *Er ist alt*, and *Er wird alt*, Old English had so confused the distinction that *weorðan*, feeling itself *de trop*, left the field to *bēon*.

That is but a half truth. *Weorðan* to-day is absent in the flesh, but present in the spirit. It survives in a score of constructions that have been called into existence solely to take its place and to transmit its syntactic function. To me one of the most interesting things in the syntax of English is the way in which verbs the

most remote in meaning from *weorðan* have come at last to function as its substitute. Remember that in Old English if a man *became* sick, or rich, or crazy, or anything else, *weorðan* was the preëmpted copula, as is *werden* in Modern German. Note now the words that have been summoned from century to century for the purpose of filling the space left vacant by the passing of *weorðan*: We say that a man *becomes*<sup>1</sup> rich, *falls* sick or *takes* sick, *goes* crazy (dogs *run* mad, cows and streams *run* dry), *grows* worse, *gets* tired, and *turns* red. These verbs are not mere link-words (as in, *he stood amazed*), nor do they denote duration or attainment. They denote the process of attainment, a *becoming*, and are the chosen delegates of old *weorðan*. It is a long call from some of these words to *weorðan*. The transitive verbs in the list had to pass through a middle voice. Thus, *I got sick* was preceded by *I got myself sick*, just as *Get out of my sight* was preceded by the reflexive construction found in *Genesis* 31: 13: *Get thee out from this land*. The word *go* seems at present to be most rapidly widening its sphere. Representative English authors use it in the sense of *become* before *serious*, *content*, *silent*, and *stale*. With a reach from *crazy* to *silent*, it would seem that *go* bids fair to rival *become* as the most popular representative of ancestral *weorðan*.

Now do not these facts belong to any exhaustive treatment of *weorðan*? Is it enough to say that *weorðan*, to

<sup>1</sup> Old English *becuman*, which has given us *become*, meant only *to come*, *arrive*, *happen*; never *to become*. The *New English Dictionary* gives c. 1175 A. D. as the earliest date for *become* followed by a complementary adjective or substantive.

*become*, was moribund in Chaucer's time and dead before Shakespeare was born? Our language could afford to lose the form but not the syntactic function of so indispensable a word as *weorðan*. If syntax has to deal with the living elements of language and not with its bleached bones, it must correlate and interpret the subtle transitions of function, the interplay of resources, the distribution and redistribution of activities that keep a language the adequate vehicle of a nation's thought. By the traditional methods of approach — the empiric, the historical, and the genetic — you would learn when *weorðan* formally died, and what ailed it. You would be told of its ancestry, but not a word as to its progeny.

It may be replied that this treatment of *weorðan* belongs more to semasiology than to syntax. It is hard to draw the line, but I have had in mind not so much the changing or delegated meanings of *weorðan* as its syntactic function. Semasiology being a branch of lexicography stops with the death of a word; but if that word play an important syntactic rôle, if it be a great *bindemittel* by which nominative is joined to nominative, it belongs to syntax as well as to lexicography.

Another illustration is found in the treatment of the so-called gerund or verbal noun preceded by *a* (Old English *on, in*). We are told that such forms as *a-running, a-going, a-jumping, a-moving*, etc., died out of written English in the eighteenth century. This again is but a half truth. There is surely the relation of call and answer between the passing of these forms and the emergence of *on the run, on the go, on the jump, on the move*, etc., forms in which *on*, after detachment from the verbal noun, has summoned to its service what is really

the nearest approach in English to an articular infinitive. This substitute for the verbal noun after *on* or *a* has not yet, it is true, attained the currency of its predecessor; it is confined to a limited number of verbs. But there are other direct descendants of the verbal noun with preceding *a* that have far transcended the ancestral limits. The idiom exemplified in *The house is being built*, which, in spite of hostile criticism, has become a permanent part of the English tense and voice system, owes its origin not merely to the verbal noun, but to the verbal noun preceded by prepositional *a*. The three stages in its Modern English development are: 1. *The house is a-building*, 2. *The house is building*, 3. *The house is being built*. The last form came into existence because *The house is building* found its progress barred by threatened confusion with the present participle active, as in *The boy is whipping*. Thus, with the extinction of *a-building*, and the incompetence of *building* to take its place, the career of *being built* was practically assured. No statement of the tenses of the English passive is complete that fails to give *is being built*, *is being done*, *was being built*, *was being done*, etc., as current forms of the present and imperfect tenses.

But not only have the descendants of *a-building* given a new present and imperfect passive to the language, they have also given to the transitive verbs of the illiterate a new present and imperfect active, and have even preserved after the verb the original genitive case which followed the Old English verbal noun.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It will be remembered that in Old English the verbal noun in *ung* (or *eng* or *ing*) took no other case than the genitive after it: *Næs [pæt sād] tō nānre cenninge* *ðæs cynrenes* = *non ad usum generis*. *On pære*



Note the following forms:

I 've been a-turnin' of it over. (*Martin Chuzzlewit.*)

En w'iles I wuz a-watchin' un [= of] 'im. (*Uncle Remus.*)

I'm expecting of her. (*David Copperfield.*)

A steamer which drowned of me. (*Our Mutual Friend.*)

This man accosts of this gal. (*Thackeray's Miscellanies.*)

In these citations there are projected three forms for the present active, and three forms for the imperfect active, each form preserving the original genitive that followed the Old English verbal noun:

1. I'm a-turnin' of it, I'm turnin' of it, I turn of it.
2. I was a-turnin' of it, I was turnin' of it, I turned of it.

Just as *is being built* (*done, tried, attempted, completed, etc.*) brings into relief the passive connotation of the Old English verbal noun, so these latter forms are the working out of the active connotation which was also in the Old English verbal noun, for the verbal noun formed from transitive verbs was half passive, half active.

I emphasize, therefore, the continuity of English syntax, and the necessity of a comprehensive knowledge of Modern English before this continuity can be adequately realized. The leaders in the study of English syntax have from the first been Germans. Not speaking English as their mother-tongue and of course not thinking in English, they would be the first to admit themselves

*lettinge his færeltes = in ipsa ejus itineris retardatione. Tō ednūwunge Godes cyricean = To the renewing of God's church, never To the renewing God's church.* The latter construction is found in Middle English and has a wide vogue to-day; but, when *the* precedes the verbal noun, I do not believe that the prevailing practice of the best modern writers sanctions the omission of *of*.

incapable of appreciating the niceties of Modern English syntax.<sup>1</sup> Under their influence great results, it is true, have been accomplished. The study of Old English and of Middle English has been raised to the dignity of a science ; but Modern English has been neglected. The syntax of Alfred is being exhaustively treated ; but no one has investigated the syntax of Browning or Tennyson or Carlyle or Ruskin. So far as I know, not one monograph has been written on the syntax of any English author born since the year 1600.

The study of English syntax as a whole remains, therefore, fragmentary. The syntax of earlier periods is yet to be correlated with the syntax of later periods. Until this is done — and it can be done only by those who speak English as their mother-tongue — the range and persistency of syntactical phenomena cannot be fully apprehended, and interpretation cannot be thoroughgoing.

In thus correlating the old with the new, it is surprising to see how little has been done even in the minutiae of syntax. One illustration will suffice. Investigators in Old English have offered various explanations of the singular verb that is found in relative clauses after *ælc þāra þe*, *nān þāra þe*, and *ænig þāra þe*, meaning respectively *each of those who*, *no one of those who*, and *any one*

<sup>1</sup> Paul, *Prinzipien*, 3d ed., p. 28: "An der Muttersprache lässt sich daher das Wesen der Sprechthätigkeit leichter erfassen als an irgend einer anderen." Bréal, *Essai de sémantique*, p. 307, makes the same remark of investigations in semasiology. But Stoffel, in his excellent *Studies in English*, Preface, p. vii, holds that "anomalous idioms . . . stand a better chance of being made the subject of systematic study by foreigners than by natives." True, but "anomalous idioms" constitute about as much of syntax as "Gorgons and Hydras and Chimæras dire" do of zoölogy.

of *those who*. They seem to see in these expressions a syntactical curio, an Old English Melchisedec "without father, without mother, without descent." Nothing could be further from the truth. The idiom may be found in the works of almost every standard writer of to-day, and in newspapers and conversation it is rare that one finds the plural used instead of the singular.

Irving, for example, speaks of the alleged prejudice of Americans against Englishmen as "one of the errors which *has* been diligently propagated." William Dean Howells says, "He appeared to me one of the noblest creatures that ever *was*." Thackeray, Dickens, Emerson, and Ruskin furnish numerous illustrations; and Macaulay, purist of purists, says, "In that short time Clive effected one of the most extensive, difficult, and salutary reforms that ever *was* accomplished by any statesman" and "This reply [of Mr. Burke] has always struck us as one of the finest that ever *was* made in Parliament."<sup>1</sup> It is not my purpose now to proffer a

<sup>1</sup> The singular is also found in Old French and Modern French (see Tobler's *Vermischte Beiträge*, vol. I, p. 196), and in Gothic and Modern German (see Paul's *Prinzipien*, 3d ed., p. 285). Neither Tobler nor Paul cites any illustrations from Modern English. I have occasionally noted the occurrence in student themes of the singular not only in the verb but even in the partitive noun preceding the verb: *He is one of the smartest man that has ever been here*. The same idiom is found in Middle and Tudor English and is explained by Kellner (*Historical Outlines of English Syntax*, § 176) and Stoffel (*Englische Studien*, vol. 27, p. 257) as due to a blending of *one the smartest man* and *one of the smartest men*. This is doubtless the true explanation of the idiom when found in Middle and Tudor English, but when the idiom reappears in latter-day English it must be explained without recourse to *one the smartest man*, an idiom which finds no place in cis-Elizabethan English. *One of the smartest man that has ever been here*, as a modern sporadic usage, must have resulted from the fusion of *the smartest man that has ever been here* and *one of the smartest men that has ever been here*.

solution of the difficulty; but I contend that the solution will be reached through Modern English more easily than through Old English, because in Modern English our syntactic sense has freer play.

The same may be said of Shakespeare's present indicative *s*-endings with plural subjects. The key to "My old bones aches" is not to be found in an alleged borrowing of the Old Northumbrian *s*-ending in plural predicates but in the syntax of Modern English. "If theories about the origin of things are not to be worthless," says one of the greatest living syntacticians,<sup>1</sup> "they must on every point be substantiated by analogies from processes going on nowadays, and capable of direct observation and control."

Let us turn, therefore, to the language of children and of illiterate adults, in whose speech the influence of analogy can be most clearly seen. *I seed him, I runned away*, etc., have often been cited as examples of analogical formations due to the preponderance in every-day speech of weak over strong verbs. But it seems to me that the most interesting example of analogy to be found in the speech of the illiterate has been, so far as I know, overlooked. It is not hard, for example, to find children, even in educated families, whose present indicative runs thus: *I sees, you sees, he sees; we sees, you sees, they sees*.

Now, what has taken place? The third singular, heard more frequently by the child than any other form of the verb, has been extended by analogy both to the plural and to the other persons of the singular. The same thing has happened in the case of *is* and *was*.

<sup>1</sup> Jespersen, *Progress in Language*, p. 63.

Their greater frequency of usage has, among the illiterate, almost banished the plurals *are* and *were*. The following citations are taken from *Uncle Remus*, by Joel Chandler Harris:

En dar you *is*, en dar you'll stay twel I *fixes* up a breshpile and *fires* her up.

Dey *goes* in, an' dar dey er tooken an' dar dey *hangs* on twel you *shakes* de box, an' den dey *draps* out.

Dey *wuz* [was] de fatteres' niggers in de settlement.

Let 'lone w'at I *is* now.

Yo' mammy'll spishun dat de rats' stummucks *is* widenin' in dis naberhood.

W'en de nashuns of de earf *is* a stanin' all aroun'.

Scores of other examples of this principle might be given from humorous tales, and from dialect stories of every locality. In one short paragraph of Miss Edgeworth's *Dublin Shoeblack*, there occur seven examples of this transferred or dominant third singular; and almost a proportionate number may be found in the pages of Mark Twain, Robert J. Burdette, Bret Harte, M. Quad, Artemus Ward, Josh Billings, and other writers who imitate the lingo of low life. The *s*-predicates in Shakespeare, therefore, following a plural subject, are nothing more than the ordinary third singulars of the present indicative, which, by preponderance of usage, have caused a partial displacement of the distinctively plural forms.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I have attempted a fuller statement of the principle in "Shakespeare's Present Indicative *s*-Endings with Plural Subjects" (*Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 1896, new series, vol. IV), and in "The Chief Difference between the First and Second Folios of Shakespeare" (*Englische Studien*, 1902, vol. 30). See also Rodeffer's dissertation (Johns Hopkins University, 1903) on *The Inflection of the English Present Plural Indicative with Special Reference to the Northern*

Not only are syntactical distinctions long-lived, not only (as in the case of *weorðan*) do they survive the particular forms in which they originated, but they sometimes shift the sphere of their activity. Exorcised in one place, they take refuge in another. English and American students, for example, find it difficult to appreciate the distinction that the Germans make between *du* and *Sie*, the French between *tu* and *vous*, the Spanish between *tu* and *Usted*, and the Italians between *tu* and *voi*. It does not help matters to be told that a corresponding distinction once obtained in English between *thou* and *you*. It still seems unreasonable that anyone should have used *thou* to his wife and yet to his servant; that the same word that figured among the members of one's family as a term of intimacy and affection was a gross insult if applied to a stranger or an equal. Under what modern formula may we group these apparently incongruous elements?

The difficulty is removed at once by recurring to our use or omission of such titles as Miss, Mrs., and Mr. A man does not call his wife Miss Mary (or Mrs. Jenkins); he does not call his daughter Miss Alice, his housemaid Miss Jane, or his cook Miss Bridget. In these instinctive omissions we group into one category the same persons that the Germans group under *du*, and our forefathers grouped under *thou*. With outsiders and equals we use, as the case may be, the unprompted Miss or Mrs. or Mr. This again is the circle

*Dialect*, Von Staden's dissertation (University of Rostock, 1903) on *Die Entwicklung der Präsens Indikativ-Endungen im Englischen unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der 3. Pers. Sing. von ungefähr 1500 bis auf Shakspeare*, and *Modern Language Notes* (Feb. 1905), vol. XX, pp. 54-56.

of the German *Sie* and of our own former *ye* or *you*. The distinction, therefore, is not lost in Modern English. It has only shifted its territory. The syntactical feeling that dictated the proper use of *thou* and *you* to our forbears survives intact to-day. It has passed, however, from the realm of the personal pronoun to the realm of the titular prefix, and has become more social than syntactical. Interpreting *thou* and *thee*, therefore, in terms of an omitted *Miss*, or *Mrs.*, or *Mr.*, we are enabled to appreciate the position of both sides as reflected in the following comment from George Fox's famous *Journal*, p. 293: "Few afterwards were so rugged toward us for saying *Thou* and *Thee* to a single person, for which before they were exceedingly fierce against us. *Thou* and *Thee* was a sore cut to proud flesh and them that sought self-honour, who, though they would say it to God and Christ, would not endure to have it said to themselves. So that we were often beaten and abused, and sometimes in danger of our lives, for using those words to some proud men, who would say, 'What! you ill-bred clown, do you *Thou* me?' as though Christian breeding consisted in saying *You* to one; which is contrary to all their grammar and teaching books, by which they instructed their youth."

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the illustrations that have been adduced are sufficient, I trust, to show that the significance of a syntactical complex is not exhausted by tracing it back to its earliest stage, even when the tracers sent out prove entirely successful. We must trace forward as

well as backward. In the summary of a man's life and influence his children count for fully as much as his great-grandfather. Nor is syntax a straight line. There are lateral relationships as well as lineal relationships. The clue to one phenomenon may have to be sought in another and apparently irrelevant phenomenon. There are affinities with style, there are notes of personality, there are analogies and radiations. If the investigator overlooks them, he will do so at the peril of every conclusion that he announces. His work may be exhaustive, but his results will be none the less fragmentary. Interpretative syntax begins where statistics leave off.

In each of the following investigations the attempt is made to find some central law of the English language under which may be grouped certain idioms hitherto considered unrelated. The law of analogy is almost the only general principle that has yet been shown to be operative in English syntax. But the law of analogy operates as freely in other languages as in English. If I have interpreted aright the idioms now to be cited, it would seem that we must concede to English at least two other principles, each of which is more distinctive for English than analogy and hardly less potent in the range and import of its influence.



## CHAPTER II

### THE SHORT CIRCUIT IN ENGLISH SYNTAX

#### I. INTRODUCTION

IN an interesting and suggestive article, *Zur charakteristik der englischen sprache*,<sup>1</sup> Professor Münch, of Berlin, endeavors to show that what characterizes English more than any other language is its tendency toward definiteness, brevity, and directness ("tendenz zur bestimmtheit, knappheit, unmittelbarkeit"). He instances under the head of syntax the single article in such expressions as *the moon and stars*; the omission of the relative, as in *the book he spoke of*; the omission of the conjunction *that* after verbs of saying and thinking; the use of such elliptical expressions as *when bidden, while searching*; the personal instead of the impersonal construction in *He is sure to come, I am likely to go, I wonder, I feel warm, I like, I hate*; the liberal employment of intransitive verbs in a transitive causative sense, *to fly a kite, to grow a crop*; the use of transitive verbs intransitively, *The coat wears well, Corn sells high*; the use of transitive verbs in a middle or reflexive sense,

<sup>1</sup> *Die Neueren Sprachen* (1899), vol. VII, pp. 65-96. Jespersen's characterization, in his *Growth and Structure of the English Language* (1905), p. 2, points the same way and seems to me equally inadequate: "There is one expression that continually comes to my mind whenever I think of the English language and compare it with others: it seems to me positively and expressly *masculine*. It is the language of a grown-up man and has very little childish or feminine about it."

*to submit, to surrender, to dress*; the merging of the dative into the more direct accusative after *to obey, to please, to threaten, to help*, etc.; such a construction as *to enter a house*, the preposition being omitted; the strongly personal impress observable in *He was shown a path, I was offered help*, instead of, as in other languages, *A path was shown (to) him, Help was offered (to) me*.

Professor Münch's citations seem to me to illustrate special idioms rather than to embody a general tendency. He does little more than count words. His method is statistical rather than interpretative, or rather his interpretation is unwarranted because his statistics are one-sided. He finds that in certain carefully chosen constructions English is economical beyond other tongues. But it is easy to cite adverse constructions. Take, for example, the clumsy periphrastic tenses, *I am studying, I was studying, I shall be studying*, instead of the older and more compact *I study, I studied, I shall study*. The difference in meaning hardly seems to justify the existence of the periphrastic forms. Take also our use of *do* in negative and interrogative sentences. Is anything gained by it? Do not the many periphrastic combinations in English show that the dominant tendency of the language is not toward brevity?

## II. THE PRINCIPLE, WITH ILLUSTRATION

A more fundamental distinction is, it seems to me, that syntactical relations do not span wide spaces in English. The laws of concord, especially as illustrated

in spoken English, operate best at close quarters. They do not carry far. English is, syntactically, an ear-language. The unit of syntax tends to become a mere breath-group,<sup>1</sup> and this breath-group is more often a phrase or a clause than an entire sentence. In other words, the normal tendency of English syntax, a tendency antagonized by impositions from the syntax of the classical languages, has always been toward short circuits rather than toward long circuits. This tendency may be seen not only in our book language but in our *umgangssprache* and *vulgärsprache* as well. "La véritable vie du langage," says Bréal,<sup>2</sup> "se concentre dans les dialectes; la langue littéraire, arrêtée artificiellement dans son développement, n'a pas à beaucoup près la même valeur."

Professor James, of Harvard, in discussing "the span of consciousness," says that "When data are so disconnected that we have no conception which embraces them together, it is much harder to apprehend several of them at once, and the mind tends to let go of one *whilst it attends to another*."<sup>3</sup> Of course, when we read or hear or write or speak the words of a sentence, we have to a degree "a conception which embraces them together"; but the span of our normal syntactic con-

<sup>1</sup> "The only division actually made in speech is that into *breath-groups*, due to the organic necessity of taking breath, which breath-groups correspond partially to the logical divisions into sentences. Within each breath-group there is no more pause than between the syllables of a single word." (Sweet, *History of English Sounds*, p. 14.) Made as a starting point for phonetics, this distinction has a vital bearing on syntax, especially on the syntax of the modern languages.

<sup>2</sup> *Essai de sémantique* (1897), p. 302.

<sup>3</sup> See *Psychology*, p. 219.

sciousness is so limited that the mind tends to let go of one relation while it attends to another. Take, for example, such sentences as these:

But yesternight, my lord, she and that friar, I saw *them* at the prison. (*Measure for Measure*, v, 1, 134.)

Your majesty and we that have free souls, it touches *us* not. (*Hamlet*, III, 2, 236.)

The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, *he* hath declared him. (*John* 1: 18.)

Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, *he* riseth from the table. (*John* 13: 3-4.)

He that can looke into his Estate but seldome, it behoveth *him* to turne all to Certainities. (Bacon's *Essayes or Counsels*, Arber's *Reprint*, Text V, 53.)

These sentences are, of course, examples of anakoluthia, but the principle involved is wholly different from the principle involved in —

If thou beest he — But, O, how fall'n! how changed! (*Paradise Lost*, I, 84.)

which is also classed as an example of anakoluthia. In the last sentence the thought is interrupted by emotion; but in the preceding sentences the intrusion of *them*, *us*, *he*, and *him* is due to the limited duration of the syntactic consciousness.<sup>1</sup>

The same tendency is seen in the frequent use in English of *this*, *these*, *all*, *that*, etc., by way of recapitulation:

<sup>1</sup> "Anakoluthia requires length or strength, length of sentence or strength of passion." (*American Journal of Philology*, vol. VII, p. 175.) But the "length" type is rarely found in the classical languages, while the "strength" type is found in all languages. In the Latin version of Bacon's *Essays* there is no trace of these repetitions, though they abound in Bacon's English version.

The number Twelve, divisiblist of all, which could be halved, quartered, parted into three, into six, the most remarkable number, — *this* was enough to determine the signs of the zodiac. (Carlyle, *The Hero as Divinity*.)

But that a wise great Johnson, a Burns, a Rousseau, should be taken for some idle nondescript, extant in the world to amuse idleness and have a few coins and applauses thrown him that he might live thereby, — *this*, perhaps, as before hinted, will one day seem a still absurder phasis of things. (Carlyle, *The Hero as Man of Letters*.)

What silly things he said, what bitter retorts he provoked, how at one place he was troubled with evil presentiments which came to nothing . . . *all these things* he proclaimed to all the world, as if they had been subjects for pride and ostentatious rejoicing. (Macaulay, *Boswell's Life of Johnson*.)

To consider the world in its length and breadth, its various histories, the many races of man, their starts, their fortunes, their mutual alienations, their conflicts; and then their ways, habits, governments, forms of worship . . . *all this* is a vision to dizzy and appall. (Newman, *Apologia*.)

These sentences could, of course, be multiplied indefinitely. They are cited not for their novelty, but because they are symptomatic of the short-windedness of English syntax. The same construction may be found in Latin, but it is by no means characteristic of Latin.<sup>1</sup> The re-

<sup>1</sup> Burke, so says De Quincey, spent more time upon the following passage than upon any other in his writings, and is reported to have been tolerably satisfied with the result. The italics are my own.

"As long as the well-compacted structure of our Church and State, the sanctuary, the holy of holies of that ancient law, defended by reverence, defended by power, a fortress at once and a temple, shall stand inviolate on the brow of the British Zion; as long as the British monarchy, not more limited than fenced by the orders of the State, shall, like the proud keep of Windsor, rising in the majesty of proportion, and girt with the double belt of its kindred and coeval towers, *as long as this awful structure* shall oversee and guard the subjected land, so long the mounds and dykes of the low flat Bedford level will have nothing to fear from all the pickaxes of all the levellers of France. As long as our sovereign lord the king, and

capitulative words and expressions may be compared to relay-stations between the opening words of each sentence and the distant predicate toward which the thought is journeying and on which the opening words are syntactically dependent.

Another illustration is seen in such idioms as *between you and I*;<sup>1</sup> *on Hastings, you, and I*; *but only Sycorax, my dam, and she*. This construction is not only frequent in Shakespeare, but may be heard every day in the speech of the illiterate. No one says *with I, to he, or for she*; but in compound expressions the force of the preposition is often spent upon the word that immediately follows it. In Browning's phrase, the "reach" of the preposition exceeds its "grasp." The pronouns that follow remain, therefore, in their normal or nominative form.

The same thing may happen when the governing word is not a preposition but a transitive verb. If the objects are numerous, those that are furthest from the verb stand the best chance of remaining in their nominative form. Such sentences as the following are unknown in the classical languages:

Made hym passynge good chere and wel easyd bothe his hors and he. (*Morte d'Arthur*, Sommer's ed., p. 112, l. 30.)

Let thee and I go on. (*Pilgrim's Progress*.)

his faithful subjects the lords and commons of this realm, the triple cord which no man can break; the solemn sworn constitutional frank-pledge of this nation; the firm guarantees of each other's being and each other's rights; the joint and several securities, each in its place and order for every kind and every quality of property and of dignity, — *as long as these* endure, so long the Duke of Bedford is safe and we are all safe together."

Would Cicero have used the recapitulative expressions?

<sup>1</sup> See Tobler's *Vermischte Beiträge*, vol. I, p. 224.

Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; the world, and *they* that dwell therein. (*Psalms* 98: 7.)

Praise him that got thee, *she* that gave thee suck.  
(*Troilus and Cressida*, II, 3, 235.)

Do that good mischief which may make this island  
Thine own forever, and *I*, thy Caliban.  
(*Tempest*, IV, 1, 217.)

I shall think the better of myself and thee during my life; *I* for a valiant lion, and *thou* for a true prince. (I *Henry IV*, II, 4, 303.)

Thyself and thy belongings  
Are not thine own so proper as to waste  
Thyself upon thy virtues, *they* on thee.<sup>1</sup>  
(*Measure for Measure*, I, 1, 30.)

I should explain in the same way such constructions as the following:

Why do you speak so *startingly* and *rash*?  
(*Othello*, III, 4, 79.)

And that so *lamely* and *unfashionable*.  
(*Richard III*, I, 1, 21.)

His grace looks *cheerfully* and *smooth* this morning.  
(*Ib.*, III, 4, 43.)

She soon shall know of us, by some of ours,  
How *honorable* and how *kindly* we  
Determine for her.  
(*Antony and Cleopatra*, V, 1, 58.)

<sup>1</sup> The limited sovereignty of the verb in the foregoing sentences recalls a paragraph in Burke's speech on *Conciliation with America*: "In large bodies, the circulation of power must be less vigorous at the extremities. Nature has said it. The Turk cannot govern Egypt and Arabia and Curdistan as he governs Thrace; nor has he the same dominion in Crimea and Algiers which he has at Brusa and Smyrna. Despotism itself is obliged to truck and huckster. The Sultan gets such obedience as he can. He governs with a loose rein that he may govern at all; and the whole of the force and vigour of his authority in his centre is derived from a prudent relaxation in all his borders."

When perforce he could not  
But pay me terms of honor, *cold and sickly*  
He vented them.

(*Antony and Cleopatra*, III, 4, 6.)

And I most *jocund, apt*, and *willingly*,  
To do you rest, a thousand deaths would die.

(*Twelfth Night*, V, I, 135.)

*Angelo*. And she will speak most *bitterly* and *strange*.

*Isabella*. Most *strange* but yet most *truly* will I speak.

(*Measure for Measure*, V, I, 36.)

Professor Franz<sup>1</sup> remarks of such sentences as those just cited that when only one of the adverbs in a series takes the ending it is usually the last. But the facts show that the ending is usually added to the adverb nearest the verb. Those furthest from the verb escape its influence and remain in their adjectival form, though in function they are more adverbial than adjectival.

In *Matthew* 5: 25 we read, "Therefore, if thou *bring* thy gift to the altar, and there *rememberest* that thy brother," etc. This change from the subjunctive to the indicative has no parallel in the classical languages, because in them the force of an initial conjunction is coextensive with the sequent predicates, however numerous these may be. But in Middle English the construction is very common, and in every case, so far as I have observed, the subjunctive stands nearest to *if*.

After quoting several instances of this construction from Richard Rolle de Hampole (c. 1340 A. D.), Hotz remarks:<sup>2</sup> "In all these passages the subjunctive, the

<sup>1</sup> *Shakespeare-Grammatik*, § 98.

<sup>2</sup> See *On the Use of the Subjunctive Mood in Anglo-Saxon*, p. 50.



rule with Hampole, stands first; the indicative follows but for contrast's sake." And again,<sup>1</sup> "The first writer in formed English, Maundeville, and the 'father of Modern English,' Chaucer, both have shoals of subjunctives alongside of a single indicative. The indicative in passages like, 'If a man *be* good, or *doth* or *sayth* a thing to good entente' (*Parson's Tale*),<sup>2</sup> must not be imputed to the use of a verb other than *to be*, but to the tendency of distinguishing one condition from the other, even if coördinate." Why, then, does not Hotz cite at least one sentence in which the sequence is *if* + indicative + subjunctive? To contend that the change of mood is due to the desire "to distinguish one condition from the other, even if coördinate," is not only to overlook the invariable order of modal sequence, but at the same time to posit a nicety of discrimination for which there is no warrant in Middle English style.

There is, besides, abundant testimony in later English that *if*, followed by a compound predicate or by more than one clause, needed reënforcement to project its influence as far as the second predicate. When *if* was not repeated, *that* was often substituted before the second predicate. Many sentences like the following could be cited from the pages of Elizabethan and Queen Anne writers:

As if the world should cleave, and *that* slain men  
Should solder up the rift.

(*Antony and Cleopatra*, III, 4, 31.)

<sup>1</sup> See *On the Use of the Subjunctive Mood in Anglo-Saxon*, p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> See Skeat's *Student's Chaucer*, p. 691, right column, line 21 from top.

But further, if preaching in general be all old and beaten, and *that* they are already so well acquainted with it, more shame and guilt to them who so little edify by it.<sup>1</sup> (Swift, *A Sermon on Sleeping in Church.*)

As the more distant predicate showed a tendency to escape from the modal regimen of *if*, so the more distant infinitives showed a tendency in late Middle English and in early Modern English to escape from the regimen of the auxiliaries. For at least two centuries and a half the auxiliaries in Modern English have been followed by the infinitive without *to*. We say *He may go and never return, He might fall and seriously injure himself*. But the occasional occurrence in Shakespeare of such sentences as,

Who would *be* so mock'd with glory? or *to live*

But in a dream of friendship.

(*Timon of Athens*, IV, 2, 33.)

She tells me she'll *wed* the stranger knight,

Or never more *to view* nor day nor night.

(*Pericles*, II, 5, 17.)

is evidence that *to*, suppressed by the force of the adjacent auxiliary, could yet reassert itself, provided there was a sufficient distance between it and the auxiliary. The force of the auxiliary was spent on the first infinitive. Baldwin finds that in the *Morte d'Arthur*<sup>2</sup> the

<sup>1</sup> A search through Chaucer's *Treatise on the Astrolabe* and *Parson's Tale* reveals two instances of this construction: "Eke if he tale vanitees at chirche or at goddes service, or *that* he be a talker of ydel wordes." (Skeat's *Student's Chaucer, The Parson's Tale*, p. 686, right column, line 8 from bottom.) "Abstynence, he seith, is litel worth, but—if a man have good wil ther-to, and but it be enforced by pacience and by charitee and *that* men doon it for godes sake." (*Ib.*, p. 706, left column, line 21 from top.) Of course, *if* was not the only conjunction that needed re-enforcement in such constructions. The continuative offices of *that* were invoked also for *when*, *after*, *because*, and *though*.

<sup>2</sup> See his *Inflections and Syntax of the Morte d'Arthur: A Study in*

suppressed *to* always reappears if the distance from the auxiliary be great enough: "Whenever an auxiliary is used with two infinitives, the latter infinitive, if it is separated from the former by intervening words, takes *to*. In such cases *to* seems to be regarded as a resumptive, to make the construction plain." Instead of "resumptive *to*," with which Baldwin heads his paragraph, a more accurate designation would be "resilient *to*."

Kellner<sup>1</sup> and Eienkel<sup>2</sup> report the same construction, but proffer no explanation. "In diesem, jetzt nicht mehr statthaften Gebrauch von *to*," says Franz,<sup>3</sup> "bekundet sich ein Streben, die Form des Infinitivs besonders zu kennzeichnen, was namentlich dann geboten erscheint, wenn das regierende Verb weit absteht." In thus making the presence of *to* due primarily to distance from the auxiliary rather than to any conscious effort on the part of an author "to make the construction plain," Franz seems to me to evince a finer feeling for the idiom than Baldwin. The idiom has not, however, fallen into entire disuse. It may be heard in *I had rather stay than to go with you* and similar sentences.

A curious instance of the weakening influence exerted on the concord of subject and predicate by the mere

*Fifteenth Century English* (1894), § 239. He cites also the following lines from *The Wright's Chaste Wife* (c. 1462):

This wright would wedde no wyfe,  
But yn yougeth *to* leae hys lyfe. (line 19.)  
That no man schuld beseke her of grace,  
Nor her *to* begyle. (line 101.)

<sup>1</sup> *Historical Outlines of English Syntax*, § 394.

<sup>2</sup> See his *Syntax* in the *Grundriss d. germanischen Philologie*, 2d ed., vol. I, p. 1075, η. Eienkel calls attention to the persistence of this idiom after *than*.

<sup>3</sup> *Shakespeare-Grammatik* (1900), § 496.

prizing apart of the two is found in the early Northern dialects of England and in the modern dialects of Scotland. In Middle Scots, which was the literary language of Scotland from about 1400 to 1600 A. D., the present indicative, with immediately preceding pronominal subjects, ran as follows: *I bind, thow bindis, he bindis, we bind, ye bind, thay bind*. Only the second and third singulars took the ending *is*, the other forms having no inflection at all. But if *I, we, ye, thay*, became separated from their predicates by even a word, these predicates at once assumed the *is* ending.<sup>1</sup> Thus: *I bind and keipis, we that bindis, ye mak and bindis, quhen thay see or heris tel*. This is certainly one of the most peculiar and interesting distinctions to be found in the study of Middle English syntax. The point to be observed, however, is that the distinction does not represent a tendency alien to the genius of English, but only brings into prominence a highly specialized development of the general principle under discussion. As the resilient *to* indicated a waning consciousness of the preceding auxiliary, so the prompt reëmergence of inflectional *is* as soon as the slightest distance opens between subject and predicate is evidence that the syntactical consciousness is affected by the distance and feels the need of adjustment. The *is* ending is the alimony that the pronoun demands of the predicate for maintenance during separation.

An appreciation of the influence of mere distance in

<sup>1</sup> See G. Gregory Smith's *Specimens of Middle Scots* (1903), *Introd.*, p. xxxv. The best statement is that of Rodeffer in his dissertation (Johns Hopkins University, 1903), *The Inflection of the English Present Plural Indicative with Special Reference to the Northern Dialect*.



English syntax is necessary, also, to the understanding of a construction that has been more or less discussed in almost all text-books of elementary English grammar. School grammars, without exception so far as I know, parse *to* in *the man whom I was talking to*, as a preposition governing *whom*. The clause, they say, is equivalent to *the man to whom I was talking*. The two clauses are equivalent in meaning, but the more important question is, When *to* is reached, has our *sprachgefühl* let go of *whom*? If so, then *to* is not felt to be, and is no longer, a preposition, but has become an adverb or particle drawn away from *whom* and adhering to *talking*. I have asked several teachers to interrogate their own syntactic sense in this matter, and their testimony is divided.<sup>1</sup> There is a ready test, however, in *the man that I was talking to*. No one will contend that there is a syntactic span from *that* to *to*, because *that* will not tolerate the positing of *to* before it. Both clauses testify, therefore, to the influence of mere distance in English syntax.

A problem usually considered more difficult of solution than the preceding relates to English compound or phrasal nouns. Why, for example, do we say *the queens of England* (plural), but *the queen of England's* (possessive)? Why in the one case do we add the *s* to the first word, and in the other case to the last word? Latin inflects only the first member of its compounds: *patres-familias*, *patris-familias*. The Germans

<sup>1</sup> This shows, by the way, how atrophied the syntactic sense has become by the system of formal parsing and diagramming instead of appealing directly to the syntactic sense itself, which is the highest court of appeal.

do not say *the emperor of Austria's army* but *des Kaisers von Österreich armee*. Sweet<sup>1</sup> gives examples of the English group-compounds, but does not attempt a solution. Jespersen<sup>2</sup> discusses the question as follows: "The only explanation, as far as I can see, lies in the different function of the two endings; if we put a singular word into the plural, the change affects this word only; its relation to the rest of the proposition remains the same. But if, on the other hand, we put a word in the genitive case which was in the nominative, we change its syntactical relation completely; for the function of a genitive is that of closely connecting two words."

The true explanation lies in the short reach of the English possessive relation. In *The queens of England were rich*, the syntactic circuit is from *queens* (subject) to *were* (predicate); but the relation of subject to predicate has never been so close in English or in any other language as to preclude the insertion between subject and predicate of other words. The same may be said of the relation between the predicate and the direct object: *They praised nearly every day the queens of England*. In *the queen of England's throne*, however, though the circuit is logically from *queen* to *throne*, our *sprachgefühl* cannot endure the interposition of a clause, phrase, or word between the possessor and the object possessed.<sup>3</sup> The relation is too close. Logic must give way to sound. We must hear the hiss of possession the very moment the words

<sup>1</sup> *New English Grammar*, § 1016.

<sup>2</sup> *Progress in Language*, § 242.

<sup>3</sup> By object possessed is meant the complete object, — the object and its modifiers, if it has any: (*the queen of England's*) *(large dominions)*.

denoting the possessor and its modifiers are ended. Until about the year 1500 the language preferred *the queen's throne of England*, but not *the queen's of England throne*. The explanation given in school grammars is that in *the queen of England's throne* the compound is regarded as a unit (= *the-queen-of-England's throne*). But why are the words grouped more closely in the possessive than in the nominative or objective plural? They are not. The addition of *s* at the end is not an evidence of completer fusion. It is a concession made to the lack of projectile power in the possessive relation.<sup>1</sup> When two words or two groups of words stand to each other as possessor and thing possessed, they must touch before the current will pass.

It is sometimes gender that finds difficulty in projecting itself, especially when gender is divorced from sex. In such a sentence as "Hæc ergo caritas in mente tenenda est, et ipsa modum correctionis dictat," there was no tendency on the part of *ipsa*, however great the distance between it and *caritas*, to assume any other gender than the feminine. Out of sight was not out of mind. But when this sentence appears in Old English,<sup>2</sup> though *caritas* is equivalenced by *sēo lufu*, a feminine, *ipsa* appears as *hit*, a neuter: "Forðon sēo lufu is āā on ðæm mōde tō healdanne ƿnd hit ðæt gemet ðære ðrēa dihtað ƿnd findað." This change is frequent enough in Old English to mark a distinctive drift in the language,

<sup>1</sup> This was not always the case. Note such a sentence as (*Blowulf*, 2157-2158),

"Sume word hēt,  
ƿæt ic *his* ærest ƿē ēst gesægde."

<sup>2</sup> Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, p. 490, line 15.

a drift away from the precedents set by Latin and Greek.<sup>1</sup> It was a change, moreover, not necessitated or even facilitated by paucity of gender inflections in the pronouns. It was brought about simply by the lack of projectiveness in the gender relationship when gender was divorced from sex. Old English writers felt no compunctions in placing the masculine or feminine article immediately before a masculine or feminine noun denoting an inanimate object; but they did find difficulty in keeping up the *he* or *she* idea when this idea was based on a long retrospect.

Number also may be influenced by the principle of the short circuit. Unmistakable illustrations are seen in the concord of collectives. School grammars all tell us that consistency in the use of singular or plural is the main consideration in the right handling of collective nouns; that if we begin with *The crowd was* we must continue with the singular (*was, is, has, it*) to the end of the chapter. This "rule" finds no warrant in an appeal to the best English usage, past or present. It is an attempt to force a long span upon a language whose genius is distinctively that of the short span. If we follow the singular collective a little farther on its journey, or if we observe the grammatical number of its sequent dependencies, we shall find that it breaks up into its constituent parts. It becomes plural. It is by no means necessary that a numeral transition occur in every case; but when the transition does take place, it is invariably, so far as I have observed, from singular to plural.

The principle, therefore, of the concord of collectives

<sup>1</sup> See Wülfing's *Syntax in den Werken Alfreds des Grossen*, vol. I, § 238.



may be stated as follows: The normal tendency of the collective in English is from unity to plurality. Though the singular collective may at the outset represent a plural conception, and though its singular form may enable it for a short while to hold its own as a singular, yet, as it begins to share in the activities of the sentence and as attention is more and more centered upon it, disintegration sets in. It escapes from the thralldom of its singular form, and its dependencies all become plural. The following sentences will illustrate: <sup>1</sup>

In tho daies eft, whanne myche puple *was* with Jhesu, and *hadden* not what *thei* schulden etc. (Wiclif's *Mark* 8: 1.)

And whanne myche puple *stood* aboute, so that *thei treden* ech on othir. (Wiclif's *Luke* 12: 1.)

And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be, that all the people that *is* found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and *they* shall serve thee. (*Deuteronomy* 20: 11.)

For the people *turneth* not unto him that smiteth *them*, neither do *they* seek the Lord of hosts. (*Isaiah* 9: 13.)

Because my people *hath* forgotten me, *they* have burned incense to vanity. (*Jeremiah* 18: 15.)

For my people *is* foolish, *they* have not known me. (*Jeremiah* 4: 22.)

My people *hath* been lost sheep: *their* shepherds have caused *them* to go astray. (*Jeremiah* 50: 6.)

When my female regiment *is* thus disarmed, I generally let *them* walk about the room for some time. (Addison, *The Fan Exercise*.)

Our club, however, *has* frequently caught him tripping, at which times *they* never spare him. (Addison, *Spectator*, No. 105.)

<sup>1</sup> I have treated this subject more at length in *Anglia*, vol. XI, pp. 242-248, under the title "A Note on the Concord of Collectives and Indefinites." A confirmation of my view is found in Blain's *Syntax of the Verb in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle from 787 A. D. to 1001 A. D.* (A. S. Barnes & Co., New York, 1901). "The transition," in the case of verbs dependent upon collectives, says Dr. Blain (p. 11), "is always from singular to plural."

And this House *does* most humbly advise and supplicate his Majesty. . . . And this House *desire* to offer the most dutiful assurance to his Majesty. (Chatham, *Concerning Affairs in America*, Nov. 18, 1777.)

Each House shall keep a journal of *its* proceedings, and from time to time publish the same, excepting such parts as *may*, in *their* judgment, require secrecy. (*Constitution of the U. S.*, Art. I, sect. 5.)

There is no better way of measuring the durative power of syntactic forces<sup>1</sup> than is furnished by a study of relative pronouns. Relative pronouns demand for their right use a durative syntactic sense. They look before and after. It is no wonder that the illiterate avoid the use of *who*. The negroes in the South always use *that* or *what* or *which* or *as which*. But *that* and *which*, though indeclinable, are handled with great difficulty by the uneducated. The English *sprachgefühl* finds it hard to meet the durative demands of the relative construction.

The pages of Shakespeare and Bacon<sup>2</sup> are full of such exhausted relatives as,

Both like serpents are, *who* though they feed  
On sweetest flowers, yet *they* poison breed.

(*Merchant of Venice*, I, 3, 131.)

In 1 *Samuel* 25: 11 we read: "Shall I then take my bread . . . and give it unto men, *whom* I know not whence *they* be?" Even Thomas Gray, classicist of

<sup>1</sup> There is, of course, no such thing, objectively speaking, as a syntactic force; but, subjectively, I use the expression to denote that habit of the mind by which, consciously or unconsciously, a writer or speaker changes the forms of his words to indicate their changing relationships in the sentence.

<sup>2</sup> See Rohs's *Syntactische Untersuchungen zu Bacon's Essays* (Marburg, 1889), p. 49.

classicists, writes in a letter, 1736 : " My friends and classical companions, *who*, poor souls ! though I see them fallen into great contempt with most people here, yet I cannot help sticking to *them*." And Matthew Arnold, in *Literature and Dogma* : " The reason seems to be given by some words of our Bible, *which*, though they may not be the exact rendering of the original in that place, yet in themselves *they* explain the relation of culture with conduct very well."

Parke Godwin, the editor of Bryant's works, in a speech entitled " Homes of the People," uses this language : <sup>1</sup> " Need we wonder that ever and anon we read in our journals of those ' God's loveliest temples ' turned to ruin, *whom*,

The bleak wind of March  
Made her tremble and shiver,  
But not the black arch,  
Or the deep, flowing river.

And *who*:

Mad from life's history,  
Glad to death's mystery  
Swift to be hurled ;  
Anywhere, anywhere  
Out of the world."

The introductory *whom* and *who*, as here used, are fair illustrations of the vagueness with which relative pronouns are frequently employed. One is reminded of Bret Harte's lines:

Which we had a small game,  
And Ah Sin took a hand.

Chaucer was constantly bolstering up his relatives. Compare " Whom that I serve," " He which that hath

<sup>1</sup> See Frink's *New Century Speaker*, p. 40.

the shorteste," "What array that they were inne,"  
 "That with a spere was thirled his brest boon"  
 (= whose breast bone was pierced),

A knyght ther was and that a worthy man,  
*That*, fro the tyme that he first bigan  
 To riden out, *he* loved chivalrie.

The following note by Horstmann on the style of *The Three Kings of Cologne*<sup>1</sup> gives a good idea of the helpless manner in which Middle English writers struggled to reproduce in relative constructions the conciseness of Latin: "With this date [1400 A. D.] harmonizes the style, which is still heavy and embarrassed." He adds this footnote in illustration: "So in the repetition of the noun with the relative; of *þan* after *whan*, etc.; in the repetition of the same substantive after an intermission, as p. 31, l. 14: 'and þat tyme þat we clepe cristemasse, þei clepe . . . þat same tyme þe tyme of herbes'; 33, 31: 'þan þis sterre þat was prophecied . . . þe same nyght and þe same howre þat god was bore, þe same sterre bygan arise'; especially in relative sentences when the relative in the genitive depends on a substantive in an oblique case; as 47, 27: 'a sercle þe which in þe highest partie of þis sercle' (= in *cujus summitate*) [other examples are given by Horstmann]; in the frequent repetition of the same words; 55, 22: 'of þis towne . . . in þat towne . . . in þat same litil towne'; in the repetition of the same theses."<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, among relative pronouns it can easily be

<sup>1</sup> E. E. T. Soc. (1886), Nos. 84-85, p. viii.

<sup>2</sup> For relative constructions equally as sprawling, see Baldwin's *Inflections and Syntax of the Morte d'Arthur*, § 112.

proved that *who* and *which* have greater carrying power than *that*. There is noticeable a tendency, at least in Modern English, to substitute *and who* or *and which* for *and that* in a series of relative clauses beginning with *that*. The writer or speaker feels instinctively that in *and that* there is a possibility of mistaking relative for demonstrative *that*, whereas *who* and *which* are necessarily relative. Compare the following sentences which could be multiplied many times:

It is the inexorable consolidation and perpetuation of the secret *that* was always in that individuality, *and which* I shall carry in mine to my life's end. (Dickens, *Tale of Two Cities*, cap. III.)

There are other works than these just mentioned *that* have been connected with Alfred's name, *but which* for different reasons can hardly be considered to be of equal importance with them. (Toller, *Outlines of the History of the English Language*, p. 156.)

Let him *that* is yet unacquainted with the powers of Shakespeare, *and who* desires to feel the highest pleasure that the drama can give, read every play from the first scene to the last, with utter negligence of all his commentators. (Dr. Johnson, *Preface to Shakespeare*.)

Could you ever establish a theory of the universe *that* were entire, unimprovable, *and which* needed only to be got by heart, — man then were spiritually defunct. (Carlyle, *Essay on Characteristics*.)

I burst into tears, thinking how ungrateful I had been to my good aunt, to go and give her good gift away to a stranger *that* I had never seen, *and who* might be a bad man for aught I knew. (Lamb, *Dissertation upon Roast Pig*.)

He has some fame, some talent, some whim of religion or philanthropy in his head, *that* is not to be questioned, *and which* spoils all conversation with him. (Emerson, *Friendship*.)

I tried, therefore, in this selection to put together essays *that* would be characteristic in ideas and style, *and which* would also illustrate the very broad range of Pater's interests. (Edward Everett Hale, Jr., *Introd. to Selections from Pater*, Preface iii.)

In fact, the two things were united with singular harmony in the man [Stonewall Jackson]: the iron character and the instant purpose: the will *that* operated like an impulse *but which* achieved its end with the precision of a thing calculated and long foreseen. (Woodrow Wilson, *History of the American People*, vol. IV, p. 228.)

Every student of English who endeavors to formulate the principles of grammar by a first-hand observation of the facts must have noticed the large number of exceptions to the "rule" that words in apposition agree in case with their antecedents. The relation between the appositive and its antecedent is in all languages a somewhat tenuous relation. It is a relation felt, not asserted. The appositive word or group of words may always be omitted without affecting the grammatical structure of the sentence. There is always a slight pause between the antecedent and the appositive which serves still more to lessen the closeness of syntactic relationship. It is not surprising, therefore, that in English of all periods there are to be found many cases in which the antecedent and the appositive are not related syntactically. If the antecedent is in the genitive case, the appositive invariably violates the law of concord and has done so from the earliest period of Middle English: "He saw his brother's shield, Sir Lionel," not *Sir Lionel's*, unless *shield* be understood. The possessive relationship cannot look backward.

Nor does the appositive hark back readily to dative or accusative. "In Anglo-Saxon," says Dr. Callaway,<sup>1</sup> "especially in late West Saxon and in the poems, the appositive participle is often not inflected, much oftener

<sup>1</sup> See *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* (1901), vol. IX, p. 348.

indeed than has hitherto been supposed. For details see p. 150 ff." "When two or more words," says Jespersen,<sup>1</sup> "are in apposition to each other it often happens that the *appositum* does not follow the case of the first word; the speaker forgets the case he has just employed and places the *appositum* loosely without any connexion with the preceding." Sohrauer gives several Old English examples in his *Kleine Beiträge zur altenglischen Grammatik*, p. 29, and Kellner (*Historical Outlines of English Syntax*, § 209) adds a dozen more from Middle English. Examples from Modern English<sup>2</sup> abound:

We that take purses go by the moon and the seven stars, and not by Phœbus, *he*, "that wandering knight so fair." (1 *Henry IV*, 1, 2, 14.)

Prince Florizel,  
Son of Polixenes, with his princess, *she*  
The fairest I have yet beheld.

(*Winter's Tale*, v, 1, 85.)

Now therefore come thou, let us make a covenant, *I* and *thou*.

(*Genesis* 31: 44.)

I see my grandsire, *he* who fought so well.

(Browning, *Ring and Book*, section VIII, line 1082.)

<sup>1</sup> *Progress in Language*, p. 204.

<sup>2</sup> Examples abound also in German and French. Wustmann, p. 202 of his *Allerhand Sprachdummheiten* (1896), remarks: "Eine Regel, die schon der Quintaner lernt, lautet: eine Apposition muss stets in demselben Kasus stehen, wie das Hauptwort, zu dem sie gehört. Das ist so selbstverständlich, das es ein Kind begreifen kann. Nun sehe man sich aber einmal um, wie geschrieben wird!" Then follow numerous examples of violations. Wustmann attributes these violations to the influence of French: "Auch dieser Fehler ist, wie so manches in unsrer Sprache, durch Nachäfferei des Französischen entstanden." On the contrary, these violations are due in German, French, and English to the same cause. Wustmann might have cited this sentence from Hermann Grimm's Address delivered at the Lowell Commemoration, Berlin,

In the last sentence *he* is not attracted into the nominative case by *who*. Had the sentence read, "I see my grandsire, he *whose* son fought so well" (apologies to the manes of Browning!), our feeling toward *he* would have been the same. The pause intervening between *grandsire* and *he* has enabled *he* to slip the objective leash of *grandsire* without committing itself to the case of the word immediately following.

Teachers of elementary English know how prone pupils are in their compositions to leave the present participle suspended in mid-air. Such sentences as "Not liking the looks of the place, it was decided to go on," "Being very tired, the game was stopped," "Leaving home at 6 A. M., the journey was finished before sunset," instead of "Not liking the looks of the place, *we* decided to go on," "Being very tired, the *boys* stopped the game," "Leaving home at 6 A. M., *they* finished the journey before sunset," are so frequent as to beget a doubt whether the rule in such cases rests on any basis in the student's *sprachgefühl*. And the error is confined neither to young students nor to American writers. It may even be doubted whether the rule that a participle in such a construction "must have a noun or pronoun to modify" be not a classical imposition. The span between the participle and the sequent noun or pronoun is too long to be consciously felt. The participle endeavors to sever its relationship with its noun or pronoun and thus to become in function a preposition. This preference for the short circuit has triumphed in

Feb. 19, 1897: "Ich sehe sein Arbeitszimmer noch vor mir, ein grosser, stiller Raum, die Wände mit Büchern bedeckt," in which *Raum* has lost case touch with *Arbeitszimmer*.



the case of *considering*, *judging*, *owing*, *speaking*, and a few other words which are now used by the best writers as prepositions.

It is this same tendency to resolve long circuits into short circuits that has enabled the present participle to perform the full function of a coördinate predicate. In such a sentence as "He entered college at the age of fifteen, graduating four years later at the head of his class," the participle *graduating* is not adjectival. It is not an appositive modifier of *He*, but is a predicate, coördinate with *entered*. We cannot transpose the order and say, "He, graduating four years later at the head of his class, entered college at the age of fifteen." Compare also this sentence:<sup>1</sup> "In 1842 Elizabeth came over to America to visit the family of William H. Prescott, the historian, meeting all who were worth while knowing in the Boston of that splendid day." As in the first sentence *graduating* means *and graduated*, so here *meeting* means *and met*.

This function of the present participle, which is well established in English but which, so far as I know, has been overlooked, must compel a revision of the current doctrine about the purely adjectival nature of this form of the verb. The traditional but untenable view is thus expressed by Whitney:<sup>2</sup> "The office of predication is the thing, and the only thing, that makes a word a verb . . . What has confused men's minds respecting it is especially the inclusion of infinitives<sup>3</sup> and participles in

<sup>1</sup> From an article by Sara Andrew Shafer, entitled "Elizabeth Wormley Latimer," published in *The Dial* (Chicago), Feb. 1, 1904, p. 76.

<sup>2</sup> In "The Varieties of Predication," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* (1883), vol. XIV.

<sup>3</sup> The present infinitive must also be excepted from the category of

the verbal system, as the non-finite parts of the verb, while in fact they are merely nouns and adjectives, retaining the analogy with the verb in the treatment of their adjuncts which has been lost by the great body of ordinary nouns and adjectives."

How old this use of the present participle is — its use as a coördinate verb in a compound predicate — I do not know. The following sentence from the *Morte d'Arthur* (Sommer's ed., vol. I, p. 35, line 6) shows that it was not unknown in late Middle English: "Kynge Uther send [= sent] for this duk, charging hym to brynge his wyf." The purpose of this chapter, moreover, is not historical but interpretative. It seeks to correlate phenomena rather than to trace their origins or to count their occurrences. Though this coördinate use doubtless grew out of the appositive use, there are no traces of it, so far as I can see, in Callaway's exhaustive discussion of the appositive participle in Anglo-Saxon.<sup>1</sup> Callaway speaks of the coördinate participle, but he means by it "the appositive participle, substantially equivalent to an independent clause" (p. 268). He divides his coördinate participle into

the non-assertive forms of the verb. It, too, has attained the dignity of coördination. Cf. "It was decided that he should have the choice of the books, I to take what was left," in which *I to take* means *and that I should take*. The infinitive is here coördinate with *should have* just as *I* is coördinate with *he*. The infinitive and its subject constitute a phrase in form, but a clause in function. This use of the infinitive, which is very frequent in wills and all kinds of formal stipulations, goes back to Chaucer's time. See Kellner's *Blanchardyn and Eglantine* (E. E. T. S.), *Introd.*, § 29; Baldwin's *Inflections and Syntax of the Morte d'Arthur*, § 241; Eienkel's *Syntax* in the *Grundriss d. germanischen Philologie*, 2d ed., vol. I, p. 1076.

<sup>1</sup> See *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* (1901), vol. IX, pp. 141-360.

the "circumstantial," denoting an accompanying circumstance, and the "iterative," repeating the idea of the principal verb. Each kind is, of course, wholly different from the participle used not as a clause but merely as a part of a compound predicate. In the latter case the participle, instead of sustaining a prolonged attributive dependence upon the antecedent subject, — a dependence all the more difficult because it has no inflections to indicate it, — severs its adjectival connection with the subject and becomes a coördinate part of the predicate.

Frequently the participle and its subject taken together become a coördinate member of the sentence, the result being a clause coördinate with a preceding clause. A recent editor of Macaulay, after mentioning the historian's death in 1859, says: "He was buried in Westminster Abbey, the stone that bears his inscription resting at the feet of Addison." In this thoroughly English sentence the participle is neither adjectival nor adverbial; it is neither iterative nor circumstantial. The expression means "and the stone that bears his inscription *rests* at the feet of Addison." The participle is coördinate with *was buried*, just as *stone* is coördinate with *He*. It is a use of the participle that cannot be grouped under any class of subordinate clause. It may be called the "successive" participle, because, as in the case of *graduating* and *meeting*, it connotes action that succeeds in time the action of the preceding verb. It has nothing to do with the appositive participle, but doubtless grew out of the dative absolute construction. It differs, however, from the dative absolute and the more modern nominative absolute in that, though

preserving the form of the latter, it has shaken off the adverbial function and denotes neither time, manner, cause, condition, nor concession.

### III. APPLICATION TO BIBLE. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, with the principle of the short circuit in mind, let us glance at the style of the English Bible. Critics have found in the vocabulary of the Bible, in the preference for short Saxon words, the distinctive mark of Bible style. The position is not well taken. The distinctive note in the English of the Bible is not so much lexical as syntactical. The Bible represents a reaction against Latinized syntax rather than against the classical element in the English vocabulary. The translators seemed to feel instinctively the structural limitations of English. They avoided straining the language. Their syntax is a model in its accommodation to the native *sprachgefühl*, the style being the least suspensive of all styles. They violated many of the technical canons of grammar, but in nearly every case the violation is a victorious concession not so much to the claims of the short word as to the claims of the short circuit.

And they dreamed a dream both of them, each man his dream in one night, each man according to the interpretation of his dream, the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, which were bound in the prison. (*Genesis* 40: 5.)

And Joseph returned into Egypt, he, and his brethren, and all that went up with him to bury his father, after he had buried his father. (*Genesis* 50: 14.)

And Moses gat him into the camp, he and the elders of Israel. (*Numbers* 11: 30.)

And both Jesus was called and his disciples. (*John* 2 : 2.)

Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. (*Galatians* 3 : 7.)

The Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair. (*Genesis* 12 : 14.)

That thou canst understand a dream to interpret it. (*Genesis* 41 : 15.)

Who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? (*Galatians* 5 : 7.)

Other illustrations of the general principle that I have endeavored to outline will suggest themselves to the reader. Enough have been given, I believe, to show that a dominant characteristic of English syntax, a characteristic that differentiates it sharply from the syntax of Latin, is its insistent tendency to operate at close quarters, to span only limited areas, and to make its laws of concord depend not so much on logic as on proximity. English syntax is essentially a syntax of short circuits.

## CHAPTER III

### THE POSITION OF WORDS AS A FACTOR IN ENGLISH SYNTAX

#### I. INTRODUCTION

IN the preceding chapter I have attempted to show that a dominant characteristic of English syntax is "its tendency to operate at close quarters, to span only limited areas, and to make its laws of concord depend not so much on logic as on proximity." Another characteristic of English syntax, closely related to the preceding and equally operative in the development of the language, is the controlling influence exerted by the positions of the words in the sentence, especially by the relative positions of subject and object.

English differs fundamentally from Latin in the placing of the words in the sentence, English having comparatively a fixed order while Latin has a free order. Latin words wear inflectional labels. They are ticketed and have therefore almost unlimited liberty of movement; but English words, having few distinctive inflections, have a much more contracted playground. Subject and object, for example, have preëmpted places, — the subject before the predicate, the object after the predicate. From long continuance in these places the subject and object come to exert respectively what may be called a subjective and an objective influence on the places themselves; or, rather, the

place itself becomes actively subjective or objective, so that if an objective case remain long in the position of the subject it begins to be looked upon as the subject and may change its form to fit its new relationship.

As an illustration of the influence of mere position let the reader repeat these two sentences: *My home is over there* and *Over there is my home*. In the first sentence *over there*, following the predicate, is purely adverbial and denotes place where; but in the second sentence *Over there*, having the initial position of a subject, is felt to be a substantival phrase. It denotes, from its mere position, not the place where, but the place itself. An analogous difference is observable in *Three into fifteen goes five times* and *Three goes five times into fifteen*. The first *into fifteen*, in spite of the verb-loving nature of *into*, is a modifier of *Three*; the second, of *goes*.

In the June number of the *Review of Reviews* for 1904 Lieutenant Joseph A. Baer begins an article on "The Cossacks" in these words: "To Russian diplomacy and Russian organization *belong* the credit of one solution of the problem of satisfactorily handling a subject race." The error here made is frequent in conversational English, and has often to be corrected in freshman themes. The subject *credit* is out of its normal position. *Russian diplomacy and Russian organization*, standing in the accustomed territory of the subject, has usurped the function of the subject and thus forced *belongs* into *belong*. The function of a word, "like the dyer's hand," may be "subdued to what it works in."

In the familiar Sunday-school hymn, "The Banner of the Cross,"<sup>1</sup> one line runs, "For Christ *count* everything but lost," *count* being an imperative. But it is more frequently sung, according to my hearing, "For Christ *counts* everything but lost," — pure nonsense, but nonsense that illustrates the moulding influence of the relative positions of words, and the risk that a writer of English runs, especially if writing for young people, when he places words in unusual positions. The converse example of an indicative mistaken for an imperative, because the subject follows the verb, is found in *Luke 2: 29*: "Lord, now *lettest* thou thy servant depart in peace." Ask anyone not trained in technical grammar what the writer of that sentence meant, and his reply will be: "Why, he just asks the Lord to let him depart in peace," and this in spite of the prohibitive ending *-est*.

But a more striking illustration is contained in a recent and widely used *Student's History of English Literature*. The first sentence is, "By the term literature *is* meant those written or printed compositions which preserve the thought and experience of a race recorded in artistic form." Having received from the publishers the opening paragraphs of the book as specimen pages, I wrote a line to them expressing my surprise that *is* for *are* in the very first sentence should have escaped detection. The note was sent to the author, who replied in part as follows:

"In this particular case all I can say is that I regard the construction as elliptical and not without the sanction of literary usage. If asked to parse the sentence I should supply the word

<sup>1</sup> See *Gospel Hymns, Numbers 5 and 6*, number 16.



*this*, as — ‘By the term Literature *this* is meant (namely): those written or printed,’ etc. The use of *are* rather grates on my ear, although it might stand as technically correct.”

The point of view here outlined attests strikingly the syntactic influence of mere position. The author had been technically trained in English, and did not for a moment regard *Literature*, in spite of its pre-verbal position, as the subject of his sentence; but he was so obsessed by the idea that the subject must precede its predicate, he had grown so accustomed to this norm, he had built so many sentences on this foundation, that when his real subject *compositions* followed its predicate, his mind demanded some such word as *this* to serve as subject *pro tem.*, until the real subject should be overtaken. The author’s feeling for the construction, though not “grammatical,” is in exact accord with the genius of the language. Dunbar writes in his *Buke of Luf*: “Be this, my Sone, *it* may be persauit the gudnes of wedowis and agit wemen” = “By this, my son, [it] may be perceived the goodness of widows and aged women.” In the *Cursor Mundi*, 873, we find “Bot now *it* es pis appell etten” = “But now [it] is this apple eaten.” About the year 1500 *there* took the place of *it*; but Middle English *it* (*hit*) and Modern English *there* testify equally to the demand of our *sprachgefühl* that a subject should either stand dutifully in front of its predicate or provide at least a temporary substitute. In his supposition, therefore, of an elliptical *this*, the author of the *Student’s History of English Literature* shows a kind of syntactical piety or, at any rate, a commendable unwillingness to worship in the high places of traditional analysis and pictorial diagram.

The principle that these random citations illustrate may be stated thus: English syntax, having a comparatively fixed word-order, is by its nature averse to violent displacements. Subject and object especially have come to be associated not so much with distinctive forms or endings as with distinctive positions. The principle of the short circuit confines the English subject and object to a limited territory. This territory, by its very limitations, they are enabled to dominate as the classical subject and object could not do. In the more plastic periods of English, therefore, before formal grammar came in to reënforce or to divert the untutored *sprachgefühl*, we may expect to find the syntactic relations of a word completely changed by a change of position. A direct or an indirect object, if it precede the predicate, is in danger of being made a subject; and a subject, if it stand after the predicate, is in danger of being forced to assume the form of a direct object.

Let us see to what extent this principle of the transforming influence of mere position has operated in the evolution of English syntax. That there is such a principle and that it is still deep in the *sprachgefühl* of the English-speaking people cannot be gainsaid. The idioms to be discussed are cited, as was said also in the discussion of the short circuit, not for their novelty, — nothing organic can be deduced from rare or novel constructions, — but for purposes of interpretation. The question, then, is not, How many times does such and such an idiom occur? but, May not the idiom be interpreted in terms of a unitary principle that has helped to shape the English sentence as now written and spoken?

## II. ILLUSTRATIONS IN CASE-SHIFTINGS

An illustration of the principle is seen in the evolution of such an idiom as *I was given a book*, *He was told a story*, *She was asked a question*, etc. Though this idiom may be found here and there in English a century and a half before Chaucer, it still has its critics. Professor Harry Thurston Peck<sup>1</sup> condemns it as a "preposterous locution." The *New York Press* places in its "Don't" column, "Don't say 'he was given a dinner,' when the dinner was given for him or in his honor." The *Chicago Tribune* puts in the hands of its reporters a sheet of instructions containing among other things the advice, "Don't say 'Miss Huntington was given a dinner,' or that a dinner was given 'in honor of Miss Huntington.' Say 'A dinner was given to (or for) Miss Huntington.'" "Even the Greek passive," remarks Professor Gildersleeve,<sup>2</sup> "cannot show a perfect analogue for 'I am made amends,' 'I was shown a room.' And yet there is a sense of uneasiness, as if the expression were a violation of a principle, and so when the dative signs 'to' or 'for' are commonly used to make the dative relation more plastic, the language is less prone to do this violence to itself." The idiom, however, has come to stay, and criticism of it will prove unavailing. How may we explain it?

The facts are these: In Old English, *He gave me a book* appeared in the passive as *A book was given me by him*, or, in better Old English order, *Me* (dative)

<sup>1</sup> In *What is Good English?* p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> In a review of Delbrück's "Die Grundlagen der griechischen Syntax" (*American Journal of Philology*, vol. II, pp. 83-100).

*was given a book* (subject nominative) *by him*. The position of dative *Me* in front of the predicate—that is, in the usual position of the subject—led to its being taken for the subject; it was therefore changed to *I*. The position of *book* immediately after the predicate—that is, in the usual position of the object—led to its being taken for the object. In such a sentence, then, as *I was given a book*, it would be best to call *I* a *nominative by position*, and *book* an *objective by position*.<sup>1</sup>

The construction is, therefore, a double illustration of how English syntax has been moulded by the position of words. It is not likely that the construction would ever have arisen had it not been that in Old English a pronominal dative retained in the passive the pre-verbal position that it had in the active.<sup>2</sup> *Hē mē geaf āne bōc* became normally *Mē wæs gegiefen ān bōc* = *To me (dative) was given a book (nominative)*. Thus *Me*, by retaining its position in front of the verb, came to be the first word in the sentence; that is, it occupied the normal position of the subject. Once in this initial position the dative could not resist the subjectifying influences of its environment,—influences which, as we have seen, persist intact in the language to the present time. *Me* (dative) *was given a book* (nominative) became, therefore, *I was given a book*, a construction without a parallel in any other language, ancient or

<sup>1</sup> I have proposed this nomenclature in a recent common school *Grammar*, § 141, note (B. F. Johnson Publishing Co., Richmond, Va.).

<sup>2</sup> For the pre-verbal position of pronominal datives, see Kellner's *Historical Outlines of English Syntax*, § 461; Eikenkel's *Syntax* (in the *Grundriss d. g. Philologie*, 2d ed.), § 188 η; Kellner's *Caxton's Blanchardyn and Eglantine*, § 45 (B); my "Order of Words in Anglo-Saxon Prose"

modern.<sup>1</sup> The change to the nominative was doubtless facilitated, in the case of pronouns, by the analogy of the nouns, which in Middle English had no inflections to distinguish dative from nominative. It must be remembered, however, that nouns used as indirect objects did not usually precede the verb either in the active or in the passive voice. But even if all indirect objects had regularly preceded their verbs in the passive (*Fohn was given a book* instead of *A book was given Fohn*), the loss of the dative ending could not of itself have changed the attitude of the writer or speaker to the idiom. An ending is a mere label, and the loss of a label does not affect the nature of the thing labeled. When *Fohn* (= *To Fohn*) *were given four books* became regularly in Tudor English *Fohn was given four books*, the dative had become nominative because the English mind, demanding a precedent subject and finding *Fohn* rightly placed for such a subject, had begun to look upon it as the subject.

As to *book* the first question is, Can it be proved to be in the objective case? The best method of ex-

(*Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 1893, vol. I, p. 219); Bernstein's *Order of Words in Old Norse Prose*, pp. 10-11; Richter's *Zur Entwicklung der romanischen Wortstellung*, § 43; and Nader's *Dativ und Instrumental im Bëowulf*, §§ 1-13. Nader's sentences furnish the best list of pre-posed datives in passive constructions.

<sup>1</sup> The nearest approach that I have found is the French *Le père est obéi*, the passive of *L'enfant obéit au père*. Excepting *obéir*, however, no intransitive verb in French forms a passive. The Latin would be *Patri obeditur*, the German *Dem Vater wird gehorcht*. See Bevier's *French Grammar*, § 217. The Spanish direct object with *á*, the preposition being nothing more than a grammatical device in most cases, becomes nominative in the passive, *á* being dropped: *El alguacil persigue á los ladrones* (= *The sheriff is pursuing the thieves*) becomes in the passive *Los ladrones son perseguidos por el alguacil*.

perimentation is to construct a sentence in which *he* or *him*, *she* or *her*, shall take the place of *book*, and then let our native syntactic sense, which is our highest court of appeal, make instinctive choice of nominative or objective. A man who had adopted two children, Robert and Margaret, and who was asked how he came by them, might reply, pointing to Robert, *I was given him by his father*, and, pointing to the girl, *I was given her by her guardian*. To my ear, the objective is the only case possible, *he* and *she* being absolutely un-English.<sup>1</sup> The word *book*, then, is in the objective case, and it is in the objective case because it is in the objective territory.

To call *book* a "retained object," as the grammars continue to do — retained from the active construction, *He gave me a book* — is mere jugglery of words. Such a nomenclature takes for granted that every passive construction presupposes an active construction still held consciously in the mind. This is manifestly absurd. There would be some show of reason in such a view if it could be proved that nobody ever says *I was given a book* unless he has just said, or at least consciously thought through, *He gave me a book*. And

<sup>1</sup> The enforced resort, however, to experimentation with the pronoun is an interesting indication of the unresponsiveness of the syntactic sense when this sense is unaided by inflectional terminations. There is not, I suppose, an English-speaking person living whose syntactic *flair* is sufficiently delicate to enable him to say with assurance that *book* is an objective without first throwing the sentence upon pronominal scales. The alliance between form and function is certainly close in English, and foreign syntacticians could be of still greater service if they would say frankly what constructions in their own languages drive them to experimentation. Comparative syntax, as far as it relates to the modern languages, stands as much in need of confessions as of statistics.

even then it is questionable whether our syntactic powers are suspensive enough to enable us to carry *book* as a sealed package from the one sentence over to the other without spilling its objective content.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> If the expression "retained object" is still to do duty in English grammar, it should be restricted to such constructions as "Christ and *him* crucified is my theme," in which *him*, though used with nominative function, retains its objective form from the sentence "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and *him* crucified" (1 *Corinthians* 2:2). The phrase became crystallized in the objective form. In the following passage (*King John*, IV, 2, 47-51),

Then I, as one that am the tongue of these  
To sound the purposes of all their hearts,  
Both for myself and them, but, chief of all,  
Your safety, for the which myself and *them*  
Bend their best studies,

Abbott (*Shakespearian Grammar*, § 214), citing only the last two lines, declares that *them* is attracted by *myself*, "which naturally suggests the objective." Franz (*Shakespeare-Grammatik*, § 137) follows Abbott. But a glance at the whole passage shows that the *myself and them* in the fourth line is a retained object carried over from the preceding line. See also *All's Well that Ends Well*, II, I, 81. The objective content may be carried over from one pronoun to an entirely different pronoun. Cf. Browning's *A Soul's Tragedy*, Act I, lines 90-91:

*Eulalia*. If the world outraged *you*, did we?  
*Chiappino*. What's *me* that you use well or ill?

In the same sense we may speak of a retained nominative as in "Hine mon scyle on bismer hātan *se unscōda* (*Cura Pastoralis*, 45) = "Men shall call him in ignominy the unshod." "þone beorhtan steorran ðe wē hātap morgensteorra" (*Boethius*, p. 114) = "The bright star which we call the morning-star." We may speak of a retained vocative, as in "My Lord and my Lady quarreled." "The use," says Sweet (*Syntax*, § 2111), "of *my Lord*, *my Lady* in the vocative relation has led to these combinations becoming [so] fixed that they are freely used in the third person without any suggestion of address." I should not say that *Lord* and *Lady* in the sentence cited are in the vocative case, but that *My* owes its retention to the frequent vocative use of *My Lord* and *My Lady*. See also Kellner's *Blanchardyn and Eglantine*, § 12 (b).

More syntactical crimes have been committed in the name of ellipse than can be charged to any other shibboleth in the whole range of language study. In "I was given a *book*," "They were told a *story*," "She was handed a *knife*," the italicized words are illustrations not of any influence remembered and transmitted from the active voice, but of the re-shaping agency of position.

Just as *Me was given a book* became *I was given a book*, so a large number of impersonal verbs have had their preceding pronominal datives and accusatives changed into the nominative through the influence of their initial position. The change took place chiefly during the fifteenth century. In some cases the impersonal verb passed out of use before attaining the personal grade. Old English *gebyrian* (= *to behoove*) attained the personal subject only in the Scotch dialect, in which *Thou bird*, *We bird*, *Thai bird* (in place of the Old English *pē gebyrēð*, *Ūs gebyrēð*, *Hie gebyrēð*) mean respectively *Thou oughtest*, *We ought*, *They ought*. The following are the most important of the Old English verbs that survive to-day with their pronominal objects changed to subjects: *Him egleð* = *he ails*; *him* (or *hine*) *hrēowēð* = *he rues*; *hine* (rarely *him*) *langað* = *he longs*; *him laðode* = *he loathed*; *him līcode* = *he liked*; *me ðynēð* = *I think*. The following have survived from Middle English, where they are first found: *Him drempte* = *he dreamed*; *him gayned noght* = *he gained nothing*; *him grevēð* = *he grieves*; *him happed* = *he happened*; *me lakkeð* = *I lack*; *us nedede* = *we needed*; *where him plesēð* = *where he pleases*; *hir semed* = *she seemed*; *him smerte* = *he smarted*; *me wantēð* = *I want*.



The change from dative or objective to nominative in these constructions is so clearly induced by position as to need no comment. The old view was that the change was brought about by the leveling of the nominative, dative, and objective under one form. But this leveling took place only in nouns, whereas the impersonal verbs, as any list of impersonal constructions will show, are employed chiefly with pronouns. Besides, the loss of inflections is not an active influence; it is merely permissive. It opens the door. Some other influence must enter and control.<sup>1</sup>

Leveling cannot be pleaded as a factor in the retention of the nominative forms in *Who did you see?* *Who did you get it from?* or *The man who I myself struck down*. Not only does Shakespeare make frequent use of the uninflected pronoun in this construction, but from his day to the present time, in spite of the ban of the schoolroom, the construction has grown steadily in popular favor. It must be remembered that interrogative *who* and relative *who*, when used as the objects of verbs, differ from all other inflected words in that they precede the verb that governs them. They are the only inflected words in the English language that are expected to retain their objective form and yet always remain in nominative territory. This they

<sup>1</sup> The influence of position in the change from dative or objective to nominative is well brought out by Jespersen (*Progress in Language*, §§ 170-192) and Van der Gaaf (*The Transition from Impersonal to Personal in Middle-English*: Dissertation, Amsterdam, 1904). Van der Gaaf shows also that *I would rather* is at least two hundred years older than *I had rather*. Since Fitzedward Hall's paper "On the Origin of *Had rather go* and Analogous or Apparently Analogous Locutions" (*American Journal of Philology*, 1881, vol. II), the latter idiom has been considered the older.

have shown an increasing unwillingness to do. Finding it impossible to move out of the nominative territory, they have, at least in colloquial English, doffed their objective ending and adopted the nominative form. This change, however, does not, as in the change of *methinks* to *I think*, reflect a change in the mental attitude of the speaker toward the construction.

"As has been stated above," says Professor G. R. Carpenter,<sup>1</sup> "*whom* is the objective case of *who*, and in literary English we write, '*Whom* did you see?' In colloquial English, however, '*Who* did you see?' has long been a common usage, and can scarcely be regarded as incorrect." Sweet<sup>2</sup> is still more outspoken: "In present spoken English *whom* may be said to be extinct, except in the rare construction with a preposition immediately before it, as in *Of whom are you speaking?* = the more purely colloquial *Who are you speaking of?*"

As the change from *Methinks* to *I think* and of pre-verbal *whom* to *who* gives evidence of the subjectifying influence of the pre-verbal position, so the idiom *Wo is me* gives evidence of the objectifying influence of the post-verbal position. Van der Gaaf (*l. c.* pp. 59-61) proves by abundant citations that *I am wo* was already in use "in the first half of the fourteenth century and kept its ground until Shakespeare's time." In other words, the pronoun in Middle English *Wo is me* is not necessarily an indirect object (= *Wo is to me*), but, since *wo* is purely adjectival, *me* may be cited as an objective due to position. Even in the *Cursor Mundi*

<sup>1</sup> *Principles of English Grammar*, § 70.

<sup>2</sup> *New English Grammar*, § 1086.

(c. 1320 A. D.) the presence of *ful* shows that *wo* was purely an adjective: "He was ful wo" (1323); "On oþer side was scho ful wa" (13,038). In the *Pricke of Conscience* (c. 1340 A. D.) *wo* is pitted against *wele*: "Now er men wele, now er men wa" (1452). In the *Book of the Duchess* (c. 1369 A. D.) Chaucer writes,

In this debat I was so wo,  
Me thoghte myn herte brast a-tweyn! (1192).<sup>1</sup>

An idiom structurally analogous to *Wo is me* is the interrogative *Shall's* (= *Shall us*) in which *us*, instead of *we*, is plainly due to its position in objective territory. No trace of this idiom has yet been found in Middle English. Shakespeare employs it in the following six passages: "Shall's to the Capitol?" (*Coriolanus*, IV, 6, 148); "Say, where shall's lay him?" (*Cymbeline*, IV, 2, 234;); "Shall's have a play of this?" (*Ibid.*, V, 5, 228); "How shall's get it?" (*Timon*, IV, 3, 403); "Shall's go hear the vestals sing?" (*Pericles*, IV, 5, 7); "Shall's attend you there?" (*Winter's Tale*, I, 2, 178). Samuel Pegge, in *Anecdotes of the English Language* (1803),<sup>2</sup> not only reports *Shall us* as common in the speech of his day, but adds: "The Londoners also will say, 'Can us,' 'may us,' and 'have us.'" Storm<sup>3</sup> quotes from Dickens's illiterate characters examples of *can't us*, *do us*,

<sup>1</sup> Einkenel traces the evolution of adjectival *wo* as follows (see *Streifenzüge durch die mittellenglische Syntax*, pp. 112-113): a. *him is wo*, b. *Theseus is wo*, c. *he is wo*. In the first, *wo* is a noun; in the second, either a noun or an adjective; in the third, an adjective. The adjectival sense survives in only three passages in Shakespeare: *Tempest*, V, I, 139; *Antony and Cleopatra*, IV, 14, 133; *Cymbeline*, V, 5, 2. It is not found in the King James Version of the Bible.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Jespersen, *Progress in Language*, § 186.

<sup>3</sup> *Englische Philologie*, 2d ed., p. 676.

*hadn't us, does em, and wasn't 'em.* In W. H. Long's *Dictionary of the Isle of Wight* (1886) I find *Be um* given as the interrogative form of *They be*, and *Wull um*, as the interrogative form of *They sholl* or *They wull*. And this in spite of the fact that the Isle of Wight peasants are anti-objective enough to say *wi' she, to we, to he*. "The basis of the dialect," says Long (*Introduction*), "is purely Anglo-Saxon."

Abbott<sup>1</sup> attempts to show that in Shakespeare's *Shall's* there is an echo of impersonal *ought*, *Shall's* being analogous to Chaucer's *us oughte*. Jespersen<sup>2</sup> thinks it probable that this idiom "is originally due to a blending of *let us* and *shall we*." Franz<sup>3</sup> adopts without comment Jespersen's view. Surely conjecture could go no further (except when Franz in the succeeding paragraph explains Shakespeare's *Here's them* as a blending of *Here's they* and *You'll find them*).<sup>4</sup> The only explanation that can be reasonably proffered in view of all the facts is that the objective is used because the pronoun, through inversion, immediately follows the verb, and thus falls within range of the objectifying influences that operate in post-verbal territory. *Let us* had no more to do with the change of *Shall we* to *Shall us* than did any other of the constructions in which an objective follows normally its predicate.

In the sentences just cited inversion was brought

<sup>1</sup> *Shakespearian Grammar*, § 215.

<sup>2</sup> *Progress in Language*, § 186.

<sup>3</sup> *Shakespeare-Grammatik*, § 136.

<sup>4</sup> This is matched by Jespersen's comment (*Progress in Language*, § 187) on Shakespeare's "Damn'd be *him* that first cries 'Hold, enough!'" Says he: "*Damn'd be* is here taken as one whole, meaning the same thing as, and therefore governing the same case as, *damn* or *God damn*."

about by interrogation. But the pronoun occupies a post-verbal position in imperative as well as in interrogative sentences. Kellner,<sup>1</sup> under the head of the Ethic Dative, cites such sentences as "Come thee on" (*Antony and Cleopatra*, IV, 7, 16). This is, to say the least, a straining of the ethical dative. Abbott<sup>2</sup> says:

"Verbs followed by *thee* instead of *thou* have been called reflexive. But though 'haste thee,' and some other phrases with verbs of motion, may be thus explained, and verbs are often thus used in E. E., it is probable that 'look thee,' 'hark thee' are to be explained by euphonic reasons. *Thee*, thus used, follows imperatives which, being themselves emphatic, require an unemphatic pronoun. The Elizabethans reduced *thou* to *thee*."

Franz's<sup>3</sup> euphonic reasons are very different from Abbott's:

"The reflexive imperatives (*retire thee*) may have helped to naturalize *thee* after other imperatives (*hear thee, run thee*, instead of *hear thou, run thou*) where the nominative would be expected. One must also take into account such plural imperatives as *go we* (= *let us go*) and *look ye*, which, by their phonetic suggestion of *thee*, must have contributed to the spread of *thee* instead of *thou*."

To this it may be replied that the *go we* construction for *let us go* is comparatively so rare as to be a negligible factor; and the *look ye* construction, though preserved in the Bible, is no more frequent in Shakespeare than *look you* or *look* without a following pronoun. The accidental rime, therefore, of *we* and *ye* with *thee* cannot be seriously pleaded as an important influence in

<sup>1</sup> *Historical Outlines*, § 191.

<sup>2</sup> *Shakespearian Grammar*, § 212.

<sup>3</sup> *Shakespeare-Grammatik*, § 134.

the transformation of *thou* to *thee*. Jespersen<sup>1</sup> is certainly right in admitting the influence of "the position after the verb." But that the widespread use of the reflexive objective and ethical dative, especially in fourteenth-century and fifteenth-century English, may have been a contributory influence, is by no means improbable.<sup>2</sup>

In the *It is me* idiom there is, of course, no echo either of the ethical dative or of the reflexive objective. The idiom has an interesting history. Between Old English *Ic hit eom* and Modern English *It is me*, there intervene at least five centuries of gradual evolution. In this evolution there are four stages. Though these stages are separated by neutral belts rather than by sharp lines, their main differences are distinct:

(1) *Old English and Early Middle English*, to c. 1300 A.D.:

*Ic hit eom*  
*pū hit eart*  
*Hē hit is*  
*Wē hit sind*, etc.

*Habbað gelēafan, ic hyt eom* (*Matthew* 14: 27) = Have belief, it is I.

*Gyf pū hyt eart* (*Ibid.* 14: 28) = If it be thou.

*Ic hit eom* (*Luke* 24: 36) = It is I.

*Geseoð mine handa and mine fēt, þæt ic sylf hit eom* (*Ibid.* 34: 39) = Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself.

And *hē cwæð, ne eom ic hit* (*John* 1: 21) = And he said, I am not.

*Ich hit am þe deouel belial* (*Juliana*, 39) = I am the devil Belial.

<sup>1</sup> *Progress in Language*, § 188.

<sup>2</sup> An examination of a hundred pages of the *Morte d'Arthur* proves that *wete you* (= *know you*) is about as common as *wete ye*. I should call *you* in such cases an ethical dative.

Jhesus heom to seyde, "Lo ich hit em" (*Old English Miscellany*, 42, 184) = Jesus said unto them, "Lo ! it is I."

"Sire," quād þe oste, "þou it art" (*Beket*, 1209, in *S. Eng. Leg.*, 1, 141) = "Sir," said the host, "it is thou."

"Frere," quap þis oþer, "ic hit am" (*St. Christopher*, 41, in *E. E. P.*) = "Friar," said the other, "it is I."

In the sentences just cited the pronoun denoting the person (*ic*, *þu*) comes first; it is the real subject, and the predicate agrees with it. The neuter pronoun is sandwiched in between subject and predicate. This order survives here and there in Wiclif, whose syntax is far from being representative of his time:

These it ben. (*Mark* 4: 18.)

3e it ben. (*Luke* 16: 15.)

The latest example that I have found is in the *Towneley Mysteries*, xx, 372 (c. 1460 A. D.): "Wene ye that I it am?"

(2) *Late Middle English (English of Chaucer)*, 1300 to c. 1400 A. D.:

It am I

It art thou

It is he

It are we, etc.

Bot hit ar ladyes in-no3e (*Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight*, 1251) = But there are ladies enough.

If any peple perfourme þat texte it ar þis pore freres (*Piers Ploughman*, B. xv. 321) = If any people live up to this text, it is these poor friars.

Hit ne buþ . . . none Vauasers, þat buþ þer on þe tour (*Sir Ferumbras*, 3183) = They are not sub-vassals that are there in the tower.

It ar 3e that stonden bifore (*Pol. Poems, Rolls*, 11, 57) = It is ye that stand before.

In the following quotations from Chaucer the figures denote page and line of Skeat's *Student's Chaucer*:

Wostow nought wel that it am I? (214, 588.)

And sith I am he that thou tristest most. (216, 720.)

"It am I, freend," quod he. (240, 1311.)

"My dere nece," quod he, "it am I." (257, 752.)

Now speek to me, for it am I. (263, 1112.)

Tho atte laste aspyed I

That pursevauntes and heraudes,

That cryen riche folkes laudes,

Hit weren alle. (339, 1320-1323.)

Lo! this is he, that with his flaterye. (392, 2540.)

Who coude ryme in English proprely

His martidom? for sothe, it am not I. (437, 1459-1460.)

For this is he that cam un-to thy gate. (440, 1727.)

"What, who artow?" "It am I." (466, 3766.)

It am I, fader, that in the salte see

Was put alone. (490, 1109.)

"Qui la?" quod he. "Peter! It am I." (495, 1404.)

I am she, which that saved hath your lyf. (579, 1092.)

It will be seen that in the *it* constructions of this period the verb agreed with the following noun or pronoun, which was felt to be the real subject. As in the former period, *it* had not attained the dignity of a subject, but was still, in spite of its initial position, merely a predicate pronoun, a subject complement. There is noticeable, however, a tendency toward the *It is I* idiom in the *This is he* and *I am he* constructions, in which *This* and *I* are the real subjects.

(3) *Transition Middle English (English of Caxton)*,<sup>1</sup>  
1400 to 1500 A. D.:

<sup>1</sup> Caxton always writes "It is I." "'It is me,'" says Kellner (*Caxton's Blanchardyn and Eglantine*, xxx, c), "was never used by Caxton, though he had the strong temptation of the French."



It is I  
 It is thou  
 It is he  
 It is we, etc.

It is not he that slewe the man, hit is I. (*Gesta Romanorum*, 201.)

It is I that dede him kyllle. (*Coventry Mysteries*, p. 291.)

It is I that am here in 3our syth. (*Ibid.*, p. 293.)

For it was I my self that cam. (*Morte d'Arthur*, Sommer's ed., 38, 21).

"It was I," said Balyn, "that slewe this knight." (*Ibid.*, 83, 25.)

In the following quotations from the *Morte d'Arthur* the figures denote page and line of Mead's *Selections from Sir Thomas Malory's Morte d'Arthur*. These citations include all the sentences that bear on the idiom in question:

Therefore seke no ferther, for I am he. (16, 29.)

For it was I my self that cam. (19, 20.)

I am Merlyn, and I was he in the childes lykenes. (37, 13.)

"It was I," said Balyn, "that slewe this knight." (59, 11.)

"A, wel," said Balen, "is that he?" (71, 24.)

His doughter is she that I love. (74, 28.)

He demed it was not he. (77, 9.)

This [is] he by whome the Sancgreal shal be encheved. (88, 8.)

Beware, for that is he that hath slayne me. (104, 31.)

And he sayd, "Truly I am he." (151, 33.)

"But is this she?" said Sire Bors. (187, 28.)

In these sentences the real subject always precedes the predicate, the *It am I* order having succumbed to the normal *This is he* and *I am he* order already exemplified in Chaucer. As long as a writer makes his succeeding pronoun agree with its preceding predicate, it is impossible for the pronoun to become an objective.

In *It am I, It art thou, It are we, It are ye*, etc., of Late Middle English, the sequent pronoun, though in objective territory, is protected by the changing forms of the verb *to be*. These forms proclaim the sequent pronoun to be the real subject. As soon, however, as the norm becomes *It is I, It is thou, It is we*, etc., the pronoun is no longer protected, and the objectifying influence of the post-verbal position may assert itself.

(4) *Early Modern English (Tudor English; English of Shakespeare)*, 1500 to 1600 A.D.:

It is me  
It is thee  
It is him  
It is us, etc.

Though a few sporadic cases of the *It is me* construction may be found earlier than Shakespeare, his works remain the best evidence that the idiom had really entered the language.<sup>1</sup> It occurs eight times in his pages, the speakers being in three cases illiterates:

*Apemantus*. Art thou proud yet?

*Timon*. Ay, that I am not thee.<sup>2</sup>

(*Timon of Athens*, IV, 3, 276-277.)

<sup>1</sup> Marlowe has at least two examples: "What would you with the king? Is it him you seek?" (*Edward II.*, II, 5).

"T is not thy wealth, but her that I esteem." (*Jew of Malta*, II. 4.)

The earliest example that I have found occurs in the *Hind Elin* ballad (see Child's *Ballads*, vol. I, p. 360). Stanza forty-six is,

Your head will nae be touched, Akin,  
Nor hangd upon a tree;  
Your lady's in her father's court,  
And all he wants is thee.

No date is given for the ballad, though it can hardly be later than 1500 A.D. The necessity of rime, however, renders the illustration practically worthless.

<sup>2</sup> Ellis, *Early English Pronunciation*, 929: "The oldest (?) example of this construction that I have noted."

*Fool.* And yet I would not be thee, nuncle.

(*King Lear*, I, 4, 204.)

*Suffolk.* Gelidus timor occupat artus, it is thee I fear.

(2 *Henry VI*, IV, I, 117.)

*Launce.* I am the dog: no, the dog is himself, and I am the dog — Oh! the dog is me, and I am myself.

(*Two Gentlemen*, II, 3, 25.)

*First Fisherman.* Here's them in our country of Greece gets more with begging than we can do with working.

(*Pericles*, II, I, 68.)

*Malvolio.* "Besides, you waste the treasure of your time with a foolish knight" —

*Sir Andrew.* That's me, I warrant you.

(*Twelfth Night*, II, 5, 87.)

*Malvolio.* "No man must know": if this should be thee, Malvolio?<sup>1</sup>

(*Ibid.*, II, 5, 112-113.)

'T is thee, myself, that for myself I praise,  
Painting my age with beauty of thy days.

(*Sonnet LXII.*)

Though the *It is me* idiom entered the language in the latter half of the sixteenth century, it has spread slowly. At present it is winning its way more rapidly than ever before, because the grammarians have begun to advocate it. Shakespeare's usage, however, is overwhelmingly in favor of *It is I*, *It is thou*, *It is he*, etc. The objective is found here and there in Addison's works, though Kellner<sup>2</sup> reports that "In Steele's com-

<sup>1</sup> Jespersen (*Progress in Language*, § 157) would explain Sir Andrew's *me* and Malvolio's *thee* as follows: The first "is due to the use of the accusative [*knight*] in the preceding sentence"; the second "is similarly the object of the preceding *I love*." These explanations presuppose a carrying power in the syntax of English that the language has never had. The objectifying power of a preposition was too weakly felt in Shakespeare's day to transmit its influence from *knight* to *me*; and "the preceding *I love*" is separated by six lines from *thee*.

<sup>2</sup> *Historical Outlines of English Syntax*, § 214.

edy, *The Funeral*, even common people, using colloquial English, say 'It is I.'" The Bible makes a consistent distinction between nominative *ye* and objective *you*; in only one passage, so far as I have observed, has position changed a nominative into an objective: "So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God" (*Genesis* 45: 8). In view of these facts one reads with astonishment Ellis's statement that "The phrase *It is I* is a modernism, or rather a grammaticism, that is, it never was in popular use, but was introduced solely on some grammatical hypothesis as to having the same case before and after the verb *is*."

The following examples of the idiom have not, so far as I know, been hitherto reported:<sup>1</sup>

My conductor answered that it was him. (Goldsmith, *Citizen of the World*, Letter IV.)

The one is inscribed to Obscurity (that is me), the other to Oblivion. (Thomas Gray, *Letter to Thomas Wharton*, July 1760: see Phelps's *Gray*, p. 87.)

*Mother*. Is that you?

*Boy*. No, it's no him, it's just me.

(J. M. Barrie, *Margaret Ogilvie*, Chap. I.)

A young friend of Mr. Meredith's (as I have the story) came to him in an agony. "This is too bad of you," he cried. "Willoughby is me." (R. L. Stevenson in *Books which have Influenced Me*, p. 13.)

Little Turk or Japanee,

Oh! don't you wish that you were me?

(R. L. Stevenson, *Child's Garden of Verses*, p. 51.)

'T was me, this day last year at Ravestein,

You hurried.

(Browning, *Colombe's Birthday*, Act II, line 6.)

<sup>1</sup> Storm, *Englische Philologie*, 2d ed., pp. 674-675, has collected, chiefly from nineteenth-century English novelists, six examples of *It is me*, three of *It is them*, and one of *It is her*.

Her world is love and him.

(Whittier, *The Maids of Attiash*, last line.)

I am not one thing and my expenditure another. My expenditure is me. (Emerson, *Domestic Life*.)

"Mr. Caine?" said I, addressing his starboard side.

"That's I," said he, grammatically and with dignity. "A man less great would have said *That's me*."

(Bangs, *Peeps at People*, p. 20.)

The worlds and all their tenantry are Him. (William Vaughn Moody, *The Masque of Judgment*, p. 87.)

Now the government is us, we are the government, you and I. (President Roosevelt, at Asheville, N. C., Sept. 9, 1902.)

"Is that you?" she said, "from the other side of the county?"

"Yes, it's me from the other side of the county."

(Kipling, *Traffics and Discoveries*, p. 290.)

Well, now, then, is this me, or is it not me, or has a cannon shot me, or has the Devil got me? (Dixon, *The Clansman*, p. 10.)

No one could worship this spectacle, which is Me. (Mark Twain, *The Czar's Soliloquy*.)

As to explanations of the idiom, they have been many. "The wider extension of their use," says Lounsbury,<sup>1</sup> commenting upon *It is me*, *It is him*, etc., "may possibly be due to an imitation, conscious or unconscious, of French expressions like *c'est moi*; at any rate, they were very frequent in the eighteenth century, when the influence of the French language on our own was most decided." But, as we have seen, these expressions originated at a time when there was no perceptible trace of French influence in English. Besides, it was not until the second half of the sixteenth century that the French language itself adopted the objective forms after *être*.<sup>2</sup> But even if it be granted

<sup>1</sup> *History of the English Language*, § 117.

<sup>2</sup> See Darmesteter's *Historical French Grammar*, § 392.

that, through a formal resemblance, *C'est moi* may have aided the spread of *It is me*, no such resemblance exists between *C'est lui* and *It is him*, or *C'est toi*<sup>1</sup> and *It is thee*, or *C'est elle* and *It is her*, or *Ce sont eux* and *It is them*. Einkenel<sup>2</sup> thinks that considerations of emphasis led to the triumph of *It is me* over *It is I*. Emphasis is almost as overworked a term as ellipse. Besides, it would require evidence to prove that *me* is more emphatic than *I*. In the *Dorset Grammar* (Philol. Soc.), 23, one reads: "We should say unemphatically 'Gi'e me the pick,' but emphatically 'Gi'e the money to I, not he.'" The Oxford Dictionary gives examples of *I* under the heading "In mod. s. w. dial. used as an emphatic objective."

Jespersen,<sup>3</sup> remarking on the similarity in sound between *we*, *ye*, *he*, *she*, and the accusatives *me*, *thee*, says: "After the old case-rules had been shaken in different ways, instinctive feeling seized upon this similarity, and likeness in form [= sound] has partly led to likeness in function." The trouble with this explanation is that it explains what has never existed. There has never been a period in English when people said with any degree of uniformity *It is we* (*ye*, *he*, *she*, *me*, *thee*).<sup>4</sup> It is doubtless true that *It is me* is better Eng-

<sup>1</sup> That is, *C'est toi* is no more like *It is thee* than it is like *It is thou*.

<sup>2</sup> *Syntax* (in *Grundriss d. g. Philologie*, 2d ed.) § 144, 8.

<sup>3</sup> *Progress in Language*, § 193.

<sup>4</sup> Sweet contradicts himself on this point. In one place (*Primer of Spoken English*) he says: "When used absolutely, *me* is substituted for *I* by the formal analogy of *he*, *she*, *we*, which are used absolutely as well as dependently: *it's she*, *it's me*." In other words, *It's me* would never have displaced *It's I* had it not been for the influence of the rime words *he*, *she*, etc. But in his *New English Grammar* (§ 1085) he says: "When a pronoun follows a verb, it generally stands in the objective relation ;

lish than *It is* plus any other objective form; but this is because the exigencies of colloquial English call for the first person singular far oftener than for any of the other forms. The principle, however, is the same, the difference being merely that of comparative frequency.

There has been, therefore, for more than three hundred years a tendency on the part of the personal pronoun to assume the objective forms after *It is*.<sup>1</sup> This tendency is not due to any transitive force in the verb itself; it is not due to French influence or to emphasis or to rime. It is merely the expression in pronominal form of a principle inherent in the normal structure of the English sentence. It is a testimony to the objectifying influence of the post-verbal position.

### III. ATTEMPTED DIVERGENCES FROM THE NORMAL ORDER OF SUBJECT AND PREDICATE AND OBJECT

In the illustrations hitherto cited of the transforming influence of position, the order has been subject + predicate + object. This order was viewed, however, only in its relation to case-shiftings. It was taken for granted that this sequence was deeply imbedded in the English *sprachgefühl*; otherwise the case-shiftings attributed to it could not have been effected. Every

hence, on the analogy of *He saw me, Tell me*, etc., the literary *It is I* is made into *It is me* in the spoken language." That is, the change was brought about solely by the position of words, sound having nothing to do with it.

<sup>1</sup> The same thing has taken place in Dano-Norwegian, in which *Det er mig* (= *It is me*) has almost replaced *Det er jeg* (= *It is I*). So, too, the Italians say *E lui* (= *It's him*) and *E lei* (= *It's her*).

construction which permits the subject to follow the predicate, or the object to precede the predicate, tends, of course, to invalidate the influence of the normal position. I purpose, therefore, to show, in conclusion, the peculiarly strong hold that the normal order of subject + predicate + object has had upon the English language from the earliest times. To my mind, there is nothing more interesting in the evolution of the Modern English sentence than the attempted divergences from the sequence of subject + predicate + object, and the gradual triumph of this norm over all opposition. One comes almost to believe that the central fact of English syntax, or at least the chief *point de repère* in all discussions of sentence structure, is just this succession of subject and predicate and object. Four attempts at secession have been made, and in every case the old order, after centuries of struggle, has maintained its integrity.

(1) In Old English the dependent clause manifested a tendency to place the predicate last; that is, to adopt the subject + object + predicate order, as exemplified in the dependent clauses of Modern German. But even in Early West Saxon there was a disposition to abandon the transposed order; and in Late West Saxon, the language of Ælfric, transposition in dependent clauses was fast disappearing. By the Middle English period transposition was no longer a principle of the language, dependent clauses having been leveled under the order of independent. The kind of clause that most often resisted transposition in Early West Saxon seems to have been the substantival clause introduced by *þæt*. These *þæt* clauses, following verbs of



saying, differed from all other dependent clauses in having once been independent themselves; that is, in once having had the subject + predicate + object order. In the majority of cases they revert to, or rather retain, their original order after a verb of saying, thus refusing to follow the lead of the other dependent clauses which had never known independence.<sup>1</sup> These recalcitrant *pæt* clauses seem to have been an important though overlooked factor in the ultimate disappearance of transposition and the triumph of the normal order in all dependent clauses.

(2) The subject + predicate + object order was frequently changed in Old English when some important word other than the subject or a subject modifier began the sentence, the result being inversion, as in *þær hæfdon Rōmāne sig* = *There had the Romans the victory*. But to-day we should say, *There the Romans had the victory*, and preserve the normal order. Inversion in sentences of this sort, though still often employed, has become less and less frequent every century. The almost uniform inversion in the Bible after initial *then* and *thus* is now felt to be distinctively archaic. The normal order has so far triumphed that the only modifiers of the predicate which, if initial, still require in-

<sup>1</sup> I have developed this view more at length in "The Order of Words in Anglo-Saxon Prose" (*Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, new series, vol. I, pp. 210-244). That the line of cleavage between *oratio recta* and *oratio obliqua* was not run so sharply in Old English as in Modern English is evident from the number of cases in which *pæt* introduced the direct words of the speaker. See Bruce's *Le Morte Arthur* (E. E. T. S.), p. 125, and Gorrell's "Indirect Discourse in Anglo-Saxon" (*Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, vol. III, p. 350). The same phenomenon is found in Old French. See Tobler's *Vermischte Beiträge*, vol. I, pp. 216-221.

version are *hardly, little, neither, nor, not only, nowhere, scarcely, and seldom.*

(3) Inversion was again resorted to in Old English, but not consistently, when the sentence was imperative: *Go ye, Come thou.* In Modern English, instead of *Go ye* or *Come thou*, we either omit the pronoun or make it precede the verb: *Stay where you are. Bring me the hatchet. Now, Fohn, you stay right here. Henry, you bring the hatchet; and, Robert, you bring the nails.* This leveling of the imperative under the indicative norm occasions no confusion. The hearer knows at once, either by the voice of the speaker or by the general situation, when the mood is imperative. Then, too, the second person present indicative is really no longer *you stay, you bring, you get*; but *you are staying, you are bringing, you are getting*, unless customary or habitual action is meant. When the imperative began to adopt the order-norm of the indicative, the indicative obligingly changed its form, though it is not likely that confusion would otherwise have arisen.

When the imperative is negative, as in *Go thou not*, we preserve the old order by the use of *Don't*, as in *Don't you go.* This is still technically called inversion, but it differs radically from the inversion of *Go thou not.* In *Don't you go, Don't you strike him*, etc., the use of *Don't* enables *you* to precede its real predicate. Thus the order is again subject + predicate + object.

(4) The fourth construction in which inversion was once consistently employed is the interrogative sentence: *Comes he every day? Heard he the news?* As in the negative imperative construction, the normal order is again preserved by the use of *Do*: *Does he*

*come every day? Did he hear the news?* The French language also preserves the normal or affirmative order in questions, but by different means. Except with a few verbs, *suis-je, dis-je, fais-je, dois-je*, French prefers the introductory *Est-ce que*: *Est-ce que je chante?* = *Is it that I sing?* Thus, by sacrificing the affirmative norm in *Est-ce*, the language preserves it for the real subject and predicate following.

The effort to retain the subject + predicate + object order in interrogative sentences by the use of *Do* and *Did* began in Middle English.<sup>1</sup> In Shakespeare, the *Came he?* construction is exceptional for *Did he come?* but the Bible translators were, as usual, more conservative. They, too, realized that

The old order changeth, yielding place to new ;

but they practiced the new more sparingly. Usage with them seems to be about evenly divided between interrogation by initial *Do* and interrogation by ordinary inversion:

Doth Job fear God for nought? (*Job* 1:9.)

Do ye not know their tokens? (*Ibid.* 21:29.)

Do ye now believe? (*John* 16:31.)

Know ye Laban? (*Genesis* 29:5.)

Seest thou a man diligent in business? (*Proverbs* 22:29.)

Lovest thou me? (*John* 21:16.)

<sup>1</sup> The only verb that has successfully resisted the pre-position of interrogative *Do* under all circumstances is the verb *to be*. Nobody says, *Do you be sick?* Dr. Murray (*Oxford Dictionary*, s. v. *do*) holds that *have* has also refused to make use of interrogative *Do*, "though very recently (esp. in U. S.) we find *do you have? did you have?*" As to *Do you have?* I have never heard it except when the question was about a custom: *Do you have written examinations in your school?* Never, *Do you have a*

Inversion without *Do* is especially harsh and un-English when it causes two nouns, subject and object, to be huddled together. An illustration is seen in Browning's *Rabbi Ben Ezra* (line 24):

Irks care the crop-full bird? Frets doubt the maw-crammed beast?

It is to be observed that *Do* was not made into an auxiliary for interrogative purposes. The *do* and *did* periphrases had existed in the language for centuries before they were wrought into the interrogative norm. For a long time there was no difference between *He recognized her* and *He did recognize her*, *Then sang he* and *Then did he sing*.<sup>1</sup> But in the interrogative form there was felt to be a decided difference. *Did he recognize her?* gained the supremacy over *Recognized he her?* because it conserved the old order of subject + predicate + object, and thus prevented the massing of *he* and *her*.

#### IV. CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

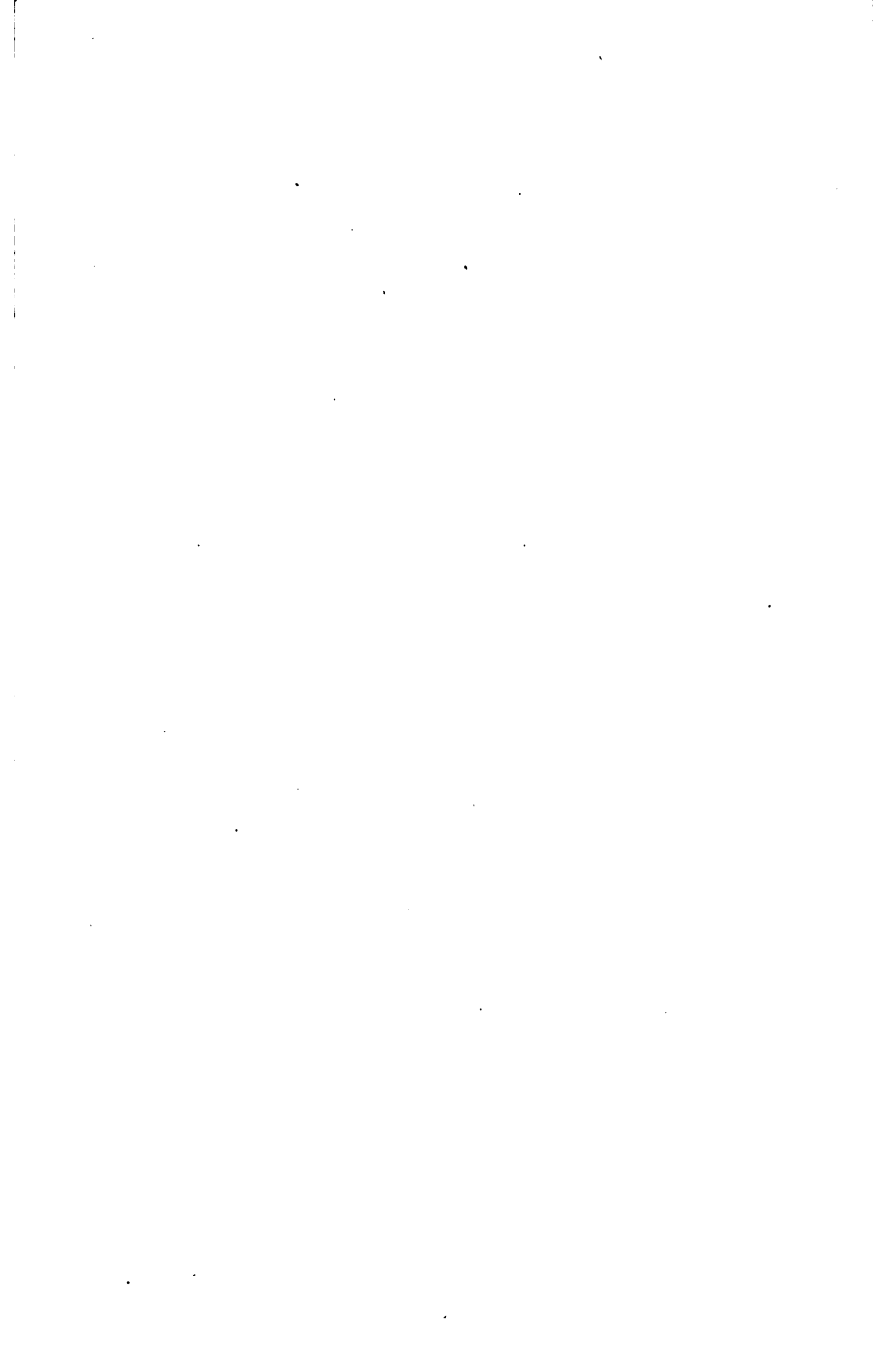
The purpose of this chapter has been primarily interpretative. I have endeavored to show that the position of words in English has an active significance not hitherto appraised at its full value; that the subject +

*match?* Does Dr. Murray mean that English-speaking people, "esp. in U. S.," have only "very recently" begun to say, *Do you have written examinations?* or *Did you have a good time?*?"

<sup>1</sup> Of *do* as an auxiliary other than interrogative, Dr. Murray remarks: "Originally, simply periphrastic, and equivalent to the simple tense [He did go = He went]. Found in O. E., frequent in M. E., very frequent 1500-1700, dying out in normal prose in 18th c.; but still retained in S. W. dialects; also as an archaism in liturgical and legal use, and as a metrical resource in verse."

predicate + object order, especially, is not a merely passive sequence, but has exerted a widespread inflectional influence; that this influence may be traced, among others, in the following constructions: *I was given a book*, for *Me was given a book*, *I think* for *Methinks*, *Who did you see?* for *Whom did you see?* *Wo is me* for *I am wo*, *Shall's?* for *Shall we?* *Come thee*, for *Come thou*, and *It is me* for *It is I*; and that the peculiar hold which the subject + predicate + object order has upon the English consciousness, as evidenced by the unsuccessful attempts at change, makes clearer to our minds why this sequence should have played so important a rôle in English syntax.





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